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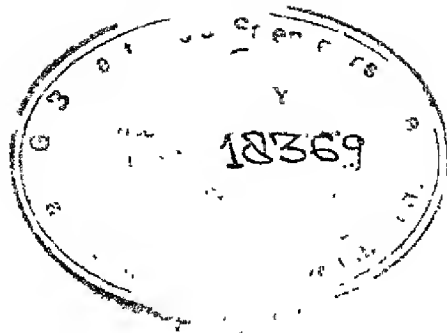
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# THE NATURE OF SELF.

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My object in the following lines is to make a humble contribution to one of the most baffling and slippery problems of philosophy, *viz.*, the problem of self. I have tried here, with the help of relevant representative thoughts in the Western as well as Indian philosophy, to develop a theory of self which has long appeared to me to be alone capable of resolving the numerous perplexities with which the problem has been riddled in the history of philosophical thought. The subject is too vast to be adequately treated in a single treatise, and, consequently, I have restricted myself here to the most general features of the problem which alone lend themselves to a strictly epistemological discussion. Philosophy, I believe, cannot dispense with logic and epistemology, and all conclusions that are not guaranteed by epistemology must necessarily be built on a rope of sands. Hence, many interesting special problems connected with the problem of self have not been discussed here, because they may be easily deduced from the general principles only when the latter have a sound logical basis.

Comparative philosophy has so far been either predominantly historical and descriptive, or it has contented itself with discovering stray similarities



between the Western and Indian thought. No serious attempt, as far as I know, has yet been made to undertake a comparative study for mutual supplementation of arguments and consequent clarification of issues. Yet, this alone can suggest the paths to new constructions and thus help the development of philosophical thought.

I am not one of those who believe that Indian Philosophy contains wisdom which is unsurpassed and unsurpassable; yet, it must be granted that Truth is not discovered everyday. What is true is eternally true, and so far as its discovery is concerned, the past attempts, I believe, have not been as illusive as the quest of the Holy Grail. We may, therefore, still draw inspiration for our philosophical constructions from the great thinkers, such as Plato and Aristotle, or Śaṅkara and Śrīharṣa. A philosophy that pretends to be entirely original must stand self-condemned.

A word may be added here in order to avoid a possible misunderstanding. In the course of my discussions, I have found it profitable to refer frequently to the arguments of the well-known Indian monist, Śaṅkara; and so far the present work may be also characterized as some sort of a logical envisagement, in the light of modern thought, of Śaṅkara's theory of self. But my interpretation of the 'advaita' position differs so fundamentally from the current inter-

pretations, and Sankara's analysis of experience has been developed here in such new directions, that I must be prepared for bearing the full responsibility for all that is said in these pages without forcing a great thinker to make amends for any sins I may have committed.

For a work like the present, it is not easy for an author to state definitely his obligations, for, any form of acknowledgment must be either too wide or too narrow. In a sense, I am indebted for whatever light I possess to all those authors whose works have helped me, directly or indirectly, for arriving at the position expounded here; and I have acknowledged it at the appropriate places. My son, Mr. D. N. Mukerji, M.A., has helped me considerably in the preparation of the index and in many other ways.

*March 2, 1938.*

A. C. MUKERJI.

The call for a second edition of this essay encourages me to believe that students of philosophy are awakening to the necessity of breaking through the crust of prejudices that has bred an isolationist attitude in the study of Indian thought. While the ideas of Plato and Aristotle have inspired remarkable constructions, Indian philosophy has only succeeded in rousing antiquarian interest, and, even when admired, the admiration is almost like what is excited by the mummies in a museum. Yet, like most of the Indian systems, Śaṅkara's analysis of experience, if approached in the critical rather than the exegetic spirit, would throw a flood of light on some of the perennial issues of epistemology and metaphysics that have been brought to prominence particularly by the philosophical discussion of to-day.

The changes in the present edition are more verbal than material, except that the Appendix B and a few foot-notes have been added. I take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Allahabad for permission to make use of an essay published in the University of Allahabad Studies for the year 1939 from which the matter of Appendix B is substantially reproduced. Mr J. G. Varma, M.A., my student of the Research Department, has also earned my gratitude by re-casting the index and helping me generally in preparing the book for the new edition.

*October, 1943.*

A. C. MUKERJI.

## ERRATA

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Read</i>	<i>For</i>
10	24	<i>dementia proeox</i>	<i>dementia proecor</i>
13	6 and 12	causal	casual
18	13	or	of
19	4	has	as
154	26	<i>nir dhāritam</i>	<i>nir dhā-it-m</i>
161	27	nice	niece
212	24	<i>tāttvikah</i>	<i>tāttv-kah</i>
220	17	<i>Dhī</i>	<i>Dhi</i>
242	12	Deussen's	Duessen's
301	24	experience	expedience
378	10	infer	inffr
381	8	<i>aviṣayāntakpāti</i>	<i>aviṣayāntakpati</i>
382	18	<i>saṃrādhanaṃ</i>	<i>saṃrādhānaṃ</i>



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## INTRODUCTION

## THE EGO-CENTRIC PARADOX

Philosophy as the thinking consideration of things has necessarily to assume that Truth is an eternal vision, a comprehension of Reality *sub specie æternitatis*. Every system of philosophy is an attempt to articulate this eternal vision through the zeitgeist or spiritual environment of the time in which the philosopher happens to live. The time-spirit, however, changes from age to age and from one country to another, and is so far limited by the conditions of space and time. But the Absolute Truth is independent of the spatio-temporal limitations, and so not relative to a particular age or country. Here lies the strength as well as the weakness of a particular system of philosophy. Its strength consists essentially in its being an organ for the self-expression of the eternal vision, but its weakness arises out of the necessity of expressing it through the changing spirit of the time. Once the time-spirit is changed, the expression, though adequate in an earlier age, fails to function as an efficient vehicle. This is why it has been often complained that Indian Philosophy,

"in spite of all that has been written about it, remains somewhat dark to most English readers." (J Mackenzie, *Ultimate Values*, p. 78.) The greater the change in the intellectual and spiritual settings of thought, the harder it is to detect the Absolute in the relative, the Eternal in the temporal.

But howsoever difficult the task may be, it is one that is worth undertaking in the interest of mutual clarification of issues; for the true aim of a comparative study of philosophical problems is to follow, as rigorously as possible, the universal dialectic of thought underlying the different formulations of a given problem, and thus detect the real source of their conflict and divergence.

Such a study, evidently, is not identical with merely detecting and cataloguing the similarities between two thought-currents. Philosophical systems may meet on a truth, or, again, they may meet on an error; and consequently their similarity does not necessarily vouchsafe the speculative worth of either. And if perchance they meet on an error, it would be but a poor achievement to have been able to show how two systems have moved on parallel lines. The cause of truth can hardly be promoted by counting and tabulating logical aberrations in different philosophical systems. It is only when a comparative study helps to trace these aberrations to their sources and thus clears the way to a more adequate comprehen-

sion of the Truth that the trouble is worth undertaking.

In view of the function of comparative philosophy, as conceived here, we may easily distinguish between the historical and the philosophical treatment of a particular problem. History is primarily concerned with a faithful description of the ideas in a chronological order, and its function, therefore, is to present each system or theory as it was originally conceived by the inaugurators. On the other hand, the primary aim of comparative philosophy being to aid a fuller comprehension of the truth, here chronology has to be subordinated to critical evaluation, and description must be supplemented by interpretation. The historian is not bound to interpret; nay, the more he intrudes himself on his subject-matter, the less does he stick to his mission of being faithful to facts. But the personal factor cannot be wholly eliminated from a philosophical treatment, because he whose primary concern is to discover what is real and true has very often to make explicit what was left implicit in the original system and, if necessary, interpret and re-interpret its conflicting tendencies in the interest of logical consistency. Thus only is it possible to offer, by means of a comparative study, useful suggestions for new constructions and expose the pit-falls and fallacies in the different systems brought together for comparison.

These remarks on the function and utility of comparative philosophy will be amply substantiated in the following pages. Some of the fundamental paradoxes inherent in the problem of self, it will gradually appear, may be resolved successfully by following the inner dialectic of thought as it expresses itself in the conflicting speculations of two different ages and countries. These paradoxes have long crippled philosophical thought and the prospect of a successful resolution appears to be as remote to-day as it was in the age of those who were responsible for the inscriptions on the temple of Delphi. And if a comparative study throws a single ray of light in the way of partially disentangling thought from some of its baffling perplexities, it will certainly be welcome to the modern lovers of truth and reality. Let us then start with a short formulation of some of the paradoxes that have kept clinging to the problem of self.

It is but common knowledge that the solution of the supreme problem that was formulated in ancient India as well as Greece in the form of a command, namely, Know Thyself, was generally regarded as the *raison d'être* of philosophy. In India specially where life and philosophy were never separated from each other, the attainment of the Ultimate Purpose of Existence was made conditional on a right solution of this supreme problem, while all other philosophical

discussions owed their value to the light they could throw on the nature of self and the method of self-knowledge. Since the first formulation of the problem, Philosophy, both in the East and the West, has thrashed it to almost the last chaff, and consequently any pretension to absolute novelty will certainly betray one's inadequate acquaintance with the history of philosophy. While, however, admitting that almost all possible avenues of approach to the problem of self have been already explored, one may still claim that it is not yet impossible for a modern student to break fresh ground, if not in the capacity of an explorer, yet in that of an humble candle-bearer; and, in view of the importance as well as the difficulty of the problem, even the candle-bearer's office may be of some use for the philosophical pilgrims to the Temple of Truth.

The main difficulties of the problem of self have their root in a paradox. That every object of knowledge presupposes a self that knows it is almost a truism which is as clear as it is innocent. Yet this apparently innocent position has latent in it one of the most baffling paradoxes with which thought has ever been confronted. What is the self that is presupposed by every object? How is the knower known? If every object presupposes a self that knows it, should not there be another knower for knowing the first self? These are some of



the simple forms in which the ego-centric paradox has been historically formulated, and it has defied the acutest subtlety of dialectical intellect. In its attempt to resolve the paradox, thought has been involved in a series of humiliating subterfuges, and the history of philosophy, in so far as this paradox is concerned, has been the history of more or less disguised prevarications. A full justification of these remarks will be found in the following pages; yet it may be useful to begin with a short statement of the salient points of our contentions.

No one, we venture to think, is even in sight of the real problem of self-consciousness who fails to recognise what may be called the centrality of the ego in the knowledge situation. Though man has, like every other thing of the world, a particular origin and history of his own, yet there is a sense in which all the barriers of time and space break down for him in so far as he is connected cognitively with the world as a whole which evidently includes and goes beyond the limited period and history of his earthly existence. In this sense, though historical through and through, he is the possessor of all eternity and of all reality. This universal attitude of man in the knowledge-situation is an undeniable fact which no theory of self can ignore, irrespective of the divergent metaphysical implications which different theories

may have to draw out of it. And it is this universality which confers upon the self what may be analogically called the central function in the economy of the universe. This may be clarified in another way. A present fact, a past event, an idea, an instinct, the psychological complexes, the physiological glands,—these are all intelligible objects; if any of them had been unintelligible, it would have been as good as nothing for us, and the assertion of its existence would have no meaning. Now, the most universal conditions of intelligibility are just those laws of thought the validity of which is re-asserted in every attempt to deny their universal application. Though, however, they are primarily laws of thought in so far as thought cannot rest content with anything that contradicts itself, these laws are at the same time the universal features of things inasmuch as every conceivable thing must be a self-consistent unity on pain of reducing itself to nothing. If every finite thing, as Hegel and Bradley, or Nāgārjuna and Śrīharṣa have maintained, must ultimately break down somewhere through inner inconsistencies, thought would start on a dialectical journey till the thing attained stability through self-transcendence, rather than stultify itself by repudiating its own laws. Hence unity is the most universal of the conditions of objectivity, to which must conform everything about which significant assertions can be made.

The unity of a thing, however, implies not only self-consistency but also determinateness; that is, it must be a determinate something. Determination, again, involves in its turn relations to things other than itself, and it is through these inter-objective relations, generally called categories, that all objects of thought receive mutual definiteness and clarification.

There is, however, a deeper condition of objectivity than even the relational categories. If it is true that everything must conform to the categories, it is true in a deeper sense that nothing is intelligible which does not exist for a self. Even if it be granted that the world of things exists independently of knowledge, the things must have at least the possibility of entering into the knowledge relation, and as within knowledge, they exist as objects for a subject or self. In this sense nothing on which we can hold intelligible discourse can exist except in relation to the self that is implied by the knowledge situation. Existence-for-self, therefore, is the *sine qua non* of all things; and there is an important sense in which it is a deeper condition of objectivity than the categories. The latter, though presupposed by every object of thought, can themselves be made objects of reflection through a sort of transcendental abstraction; and in so far as they become objects, the categories themselves presuppose the self as much as the things which they condition. Thus, the self is the deepest of the

transcendental conditions of objectivity and is presupposed by, and consequently overreaches, all distinctions between form and matter, reality and appearance, man and God, spirit and matter, and so on. And it is this truth which we intend to express through the centrality of the ego; and, considered in this light, the self may be fitly, though still analogically, called the centre of an indefinite number of concentric circles, each periphery being occupied by one class of objects. It is perhaps clear from this centrality of the self that no theory of self-consciousness can claim to be satisfactory that seeks to resolve the ego-centric paradox by decentralizing the self and thus identifying the real self with one of the objects on the periphery.

To turn now to the problem of self-consciousness. How has philosophy resolved the ego-centric paradox? Two methods are clearly discernible in the history of philosophy, the experimental or the inductive method, and the logical or the transcendental method. Of these, the former, on account of its relative simplicity, has found favour with a large circle of contemporary metaphysicians and psychologists, while the latter has yielded important results at the hands of those who are generally known as idealists or transcendentalists. The inductive method, to begin with this, is the method to which are pledged the realist and the pragmatist, the psychologist and

the psycho-analyst. Experience is then battle cry, and consequently no knowledge is supposed to be worth the name that has not stood the test of repeated observations and laboratory experiments. Thus, for example, B. Russell would challenge the truth of a number of traditional notions of philosophy—*e.g.*, the world is a systematic unity, knowledge implies the relation of subject with object, consciousness is an ultimate unanalysable fact—because they are inconsistent with the discoveries of comparative psychology. Similarly, J. B. Watson and his followers would propose to replace the terms consciousness, mental states, mind and the like, by muscular and glandular changes following upon a given stimulus, because the former are supposed to be gratuitous hypotheses for a scientific explanation of human and animal behaviours. Lastly, the discoveries of the psycho-neurotic hospital are supposed to be equally fatal to some of the traditional theories of philosophers about the unity of self or the reality of a pure ego. Neurosis following on unsuccessful repression, the pathological manifestations consequent on excessive introversion, sudden onsets of dissociation, gradual sinking into *dementia proecor*, hypnosis, dreams, and the apparently trifling slips of pen and tongue.—these are some of the hard facts guaranteed by experience and not *a priori* speculations and mere theories. It is a careful scientific study of these facts

alone, it is widely and emphatically claimed, that will ultimately answer the command—Know Thyself.

After what has been said above about the centrality of the ego, it is not at all difficult to detect the common fallacy vitiating all these empirical methods of analysing knowledge in terms of something other than itself. The fallacy is the outcome of an obstinate objective attitude of mind and may be called the fallacy of decentralization of the self arising out of the identification of the true self with the peripheral objects that may consequently be called spurious selves or pseudo-egos. And the fallacy is at least as old as the Nyāya Philosophy of India, which Locke has comparatively recently introduced into Western philosophy. The conception of knowledge as a property of a particular class of things in what Alexander has aptly called the democracy of the universe is indissolubly connected with the conception of the cognitive relation as a relation between two determinate entities, one being distinguished from the other by its peculiar attribute or quality. When this mechanical notion is uncritically accepted, the result is behaviourism, vitalism, pragmatism, voluntarism or some other so-far-nameless theories which may identify the self with mind, attention, reason or intellect. And so long as the mechanical conception of the knowledge situation is not abandoned, it matters little which of these pseudo-egos is favoured by a

particular thinker for the decentralization is complete in any case; and decentralization has implicit in it the germ of materialism. But once the decentralization is there, it has the advantage of effectively disguising the real difficulties of self-consciousness, for then we may be said to know the self in the same way as we know, say, a chair or a table. But the price of the easy victory has always to be paid dearly. For, the mechanical theory has implicit-in it the awkward *regressus ad infinitum* which comes to the surface as soon as the real question is rightly put. When A knows B, each of which has its peculiar property, they must first be distinguished by a self which on that very account cannot be identified with one of the distincts. This latter self, again, being itself a distinct entity, must require another self, for which it exists, and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus the birth of an indefinite number of selves or an infinite series of *anuvyavasāyas* has been rightly considered as one of the unanswerable objections to the mechanical theory of knowledge. It might almost be called the hard rock on which every such theory must ultimately be wrecked.

The reason, however, why even an accomplished thinker has to succumb to the simplicity of the mechanical theory of knowledge is that while offering an analysis of knowledge he unwittingly drops himself out of sight and so fails to recognise the

unique relation in which he himself stands to the entities which, according to him, are present in the knowledge situation as a whole. When, for instance, knowledge is reduced to a peculiar characteristic of the total process from stimulus to reaction, or when the self is described as the casual nexus among a series of events, it is entirely forgotten that the stimulus, the reaction or the events are intelligible only in so far as his own relation to them is not reducible to any of the relations that may obtain between the stimulus and the reaction, and in so far as he himself is not the casual nexus of events. All these things are intelligible entities for him, because they conform to the general conditions of objectivity, and because his own relation to them is different from any inter-objective relation.

The nature of the unique relation between the subject and the object, as well as the fundamental defect of identifying the relation of an object to its transcendental conditions with an inter-objective relation, may be shown in another way, as a transition to the transcendental method of solving the ego-centric paradox. Self-consistency is the first condition of conceivability, and every conceivable object, therefore, must be a self-consistent unity. But the relation of the object A, for instance, to the law of consistency is certainly not identical with the relation of A to B. Unity is the basis, the very life-



blood of both A and B as of every other determinate thing. Consequently, the law which is the common basis of A as well as B is related to them in a way entirely different from that in which A is related to B. The former, in fact, is the unique relation of the universal to the particular as distinct from any relation between two particulars. Hence the empiricist's reduction of knowledge to the relation of compresence between the mental acts and the objects is bound to be inadequate in the long run; and he misses the universal simply because it is not known in the same way as the particular. The experimental method which is deified by him may yield empirical generalizations, but what precisely it cannot give him is the true universal. Yet, without the universal the inductive methods of generalization lose all their meaning, and consequently every attempt to derive the transcendental conditions of knowledge by the inductive method, as in the case of Hume or Mill, is vitiated by *hysteron proteron*.

If the method of discovering the transcendental conditions of knowledge be called the method of transcendental analysis or logical reflexion as distinct from the inductive or experimental method, then these contentions may be summarised as follows. The universal conditions of experience being the basis of all objects that may stand as the subject of significant judgments, they are related to the objects

in a different way from that in which objects are related *inter se*. And the inductive method which is the source of our knowledge of the particular is, for that very reason, not competent to establish the universal logical implicates of knowledge, though its own success depends upon the universality of these very logical principles which it fails to establish. These principles, therefore, are discovered through transcendental analysis of the nature of knowledge, and their universality is proved by the *hysteron proteron* which vitiates every attempt to derive them from experience.

If, then, the experimental method has to be definitely abandoned in discovering the universal logical implicates of knowledge, its bankruptcy is likely to be more pronounced in knowing the ultimate transcendental basis of knowledge, namely, the self, for which exist not only the things but even their logical implicates. This leads us naturally to the views of the transcendentalist or idealist whose distinction between the inductive method and transcendental analysis is a very valuable philosophical achievement. The self being the deepest of the conditions of objectivity, the surest way of missing it is to look for it in the wrong direction. Even the logical implicates of experience,—namely, space, time, unity, causality, reciprocity, etc.—are not known in the same way as that in which a particular

thing is known. But from the fact that these universal forms of knowledge or experience are not known in the same way as we know, say, a colour or a sound, the stimulus or the reaction, it does not follow that they are not known at all; what does follow is that they cannot be known in the same way as we know the particular facts which are laid out according to these universal forms. In other words, the logical implicates are the ultimate forms of thought and existence, and, though unknowable inductively or experimentally, are yet known through transcendental reflexion, and, though abstractions apart from matter, they are still the life-blood of concrete things which are always *formed* matters.

So much being granted, we must consider how these contentions bear on the problem of self-consciousness. Existence-for-self, as already urged, is the highest form of objective existence; nothing can exist for me which I cannot conceive as existing. In this sense, idea and image, reflex arc and libido, tree and table, quite as much as space and time, unity and causality, end and means, phenomenon and noumenon, must all exist for the self, which on that very account is the centre of the universe. From this, however, the transcendentalist has drawn the conclusion that self-consciousness is the highest category of thought and existence. If it be granted that existence-for-self is the highest *a priori* form,

and if it be further granted that forms are known through transcendental reflexion, though not through the inductive method, it must, he urges, be also granted that the self is known through the same method which yields knowledge of the other universal forms of existence. Post-Kantian Idealism has, thus, sought to solve the ego-centric paradox in a way entirely different from that of empiricism and realism, and the idealistic solution of the paradox stands to this day as the most satisfactory account of self-knowledge. It has staunch advocates not only in England where Hegelianism has come to establish itself as a permanent philosophical tendency, but it is accepted as final also by many accomplished thinkers of contemporary Italy and India, where Hegelianism has very recently penetrated and is still seeking a lodgment.

In commenting on the transcendentalist's theory of self, we must begin by emphasising the value of a number of permanent contributions he has made to the understanding of the place of the self in knowledge. These consist mainly in showing that the self is not a substance having knowledge as a property, that knowledge cannot be understood in terms of something other than itself, that all distinctions are within knowledge, that the subject-object relation is unique and is the presupposition of all other relations between objects and objects. These are some

of the main principles which form the core of his insight obtained by a penetrating and strictly logical analysis of knowledge; and it is only when this valuable insight is distorted under the influence of extra-logical considerations that he forgets the results of an unbiassed analysis. And in proportion to the violence done to the logical insight, he makes himself liable to the same fallacy of decentralization of the ego which he has done so much to expose. The self, according to the transcendentalist, exists as one self only as it opposes itself as object, to itself as subject, and yet transcends that opposition. In this sense, the self is a concrete unity, a dual unity, of a restored unity, or, again, a transparent identity-in-difference; and the puzzle of self-consciousness, it is held, is due to our tendency to separate identity from difference. Now, the question that we venture to raise at this place is whether this is a real solution of the ego-centric paradox. That unity-in-difference is the highest form to which every conceivable object of thought must conform may be true, but this by itself does not show that the subject for which such a form exists is itself a unity-in-difference; in other words, even the distinction between form and matter presupposes the subject which, therefore, cannot be identified with one of the distincts. To do so would be to contradict the principle that the self is the pre-supposition of all objects of thought or that all dis-

functions are within knowledge. Again, even supposing that the self is a unity-in-difference, it flatly contradicts the assertion that the subject is not a substance, for, such a self as at least the property of being a dual unity as distinct from an undifferentiated or unrestored unity and so far it is analogous to the stone, though the latter has another distinguishing attribute, namely, weight. The fact is that nothing which exists by opposing itself to something other than itself can be identified with the central ego for which exist all opposites and all distincts, and which, therefore, is not to be confused with one of them.

That the categories, howsoever different from the things which they condition, are still objects for a subject follows from the centrality of the ego, and it is as illogical to identify the self with a category as to identify it with the nervous system or with the psychological complexes. Yet, the identification of the self with the category of unity has been the source of the strength as well as the weakness of the transcendental theories of self-consciousness. The self has been openly claimed to be a logical form by Bonatelli and Varisco of Italy; and in so far as the British Neo-Hegelians are concerned, there seems to be some truth in Pringle-Pattison's remark that they give us the logical ideal in place of a real self. It need not, however, be denied that there is a sense in which

self-consciousness is a mediated unity that is the consciousness of the self and that of the not-self are correlative with each other, in so far as it is only in relation to the object determined as the not-self that I am conscious of myself. But our contention is that when the self is thus determined in relation to the not-self, it is just one thing among other things and not the central self for which exist all things and all distinctions between things. And it is very significant that even Bosanquet is compelled by these considerations to reject the finality of the idea of subject in so far as it implies the subject-object relation. In fact, such a determined self as is implied in mediated self-consciousness cannot be anything more than what James Ward calls the spiritual self which is but one of the many presentations, and not the self to whom is presented the sensory, the ideational, the personal, or the spiritual self. It is, to adopt a very significant expression of Stout, only one of the presentational doubles or wrappings which mask the real self.

There are, however, transcendentalists who, unlike E. Caird or Dr. Halдар, appear to have kept more consistently to the centrality of the ego than to the Hegelian tradition. Green's genius, for instance, though nurtured in the transcendental school of Oxford, made a desperate attempt to rise above the shortcomings, or rather the backslidings, of

British Neo-Hegelianism    *That* the self exists as the basis of all objects of knowledge is certain, but *what* it is positively cannot be known; the only knowledge we have of the self is negative and, therefore, according to Green, the relations by which, through its action, phenomena are determined are not relations *of* it—not relations by which it is itself determined. Thus while Caird conceives the self as a unity of differences and as a circle of relations in itself, Green is led to describe it as a principle of union which is not one or any number of the relations. Again, while Caird accuses Kant of not seeing the absurdity of the supposition that the synthesis by which the self becomes conscious of itself as an object at the same time hides it from itself, Green accuses Locke of making the absurd attempt to know that which renders knowledge possible as he might know any other object. Thus, Caird saves his theory of a knowable self by decentralizing the ego, but Green attempts to stick to the centrality of the ego and is inevitably landed in agnosticism in so far as the self is concerned. And Caird did not fail to see and deplore this difference between his own position and that of his friend.

In fact, that an unbiassed analysis of knowledge in accordance with the transcendental method must lead to some sort of agnosticism in regard to the self has been clearly seen by Green's critics.



The ego in this theory reduces itself to what Balfour calls the bare geometrical point.

Similarly, Bonucci detects agnosticism in Gentile's theory of self as the subject; Stout finds the pure ego of Ward reducing itself to an empty form; and Pringle-Pattison rightly finds Green's ego to be the dot on the 'i.' What this agnosticism teaches is not that we can lay down logic, as the critics have suggested, for to do so would be to substitute dogmatism and blind faith for philosophy. But what it does teach is that the ego-centric paradox is yet to be resolved.

Thus, the real problem of self-consciousness or self-knowledge remains unsolved to the present day. The inductive or psychological method has inevitably led to the decentralization of the self which is wrongly identified with one of the pseudo-egos on the periphery; and the result is that those who have pledged themselves to the inductive method do not even see that there is a problem of self-consciousness at all. The transcendental method, on the other hand, leads, by an inner logic, to the theory of self as a *focus imaginarius*; and in so far as the transcendentalist has succeeded in avoiding this legitimate conclusion from the centrality of the ego which he accepts ungrudgingly, he has done so only by committing the same fallacy which he has himself done so much to explode in the psychological theories. If, then, both

the methods have failed in resolving the ego-centric paradox, a third method is the crying need of modern philosophy.

But, before we start on an exposition of this new method of approach, a somewhat detailed examination of the two current methods, attempted in the two following chapters, will be useful for a correct appreciation of their merits as well as of the crucial points on which they appear to break down.

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

The doctrine that the Self, the existence of which none can seriously doubt, is yet essentially unknowable through the ordinary avenues of knowledge is as old as the Upaniṣads. The puzzle was started by Yājñavalkya, the distinguished teacher of the early 'Vedānta' absolutism, in his famous dialogues with Maitreyī and Gārgī. That through which everything is known, he urged, cannot itself be made an object of knowledge; none can know the knower (*yenedam sarvam vijānāti tam kena vijānīyāt vijñātāram are kena vijānīyāt—Brh. Up., II 4 14, III.8. 11.*) The puzzle has remained ingrained in the Vedānta philosophy of a later age, and has found in Śaṅkara one of its most powerful exponents. In the history of Western thought, a strikingly similar doctrine has been the upshot of Kant's critical analysis of knowledge. Kant's relentless criticism of rational psychology for its erroneous application of the categories to the transcendental ego brought out the puzzle of self-knowledge in a manner which is strongly reminiscent of the thoughts of Yājñavalkya and Śaṅkara. As nothing can be an object of knowledge without the application of the cate-

gories and as the self is the source of all the categories of knowledge, reason is committed to an awkward pass in its attempt to know the knower which, therefore, can best be represented by the X.

This peculiar agnosticism has naturally elicited vehement criticism, both in the East and the West, yet, there seems to be a remarkably smooth passage of thought from the premises to the agnostic conclusion. From the admission that the self is the ultimate presupposition of everything known and knowable, that it is the universal centre to which all that can be known as existing has a necessary reference, it seems to follow naturally that the transcendental ego cannot be an object of knowledge except through a process of logical decentralization which places the ego somewhere on the periphery. Indeed, those who have accepted the premises and yet denied the conclusion appear to have been influenced more by a sentimental horror of agnosticism rather than by the logical cogency of arguments, the result being that while the logic of the situation tends towards some sort of agnosticism in respect of the nature of the self, this agnosticism itself is made the basis of the logical inadequacy of the initial analysis. In other words, it is first assumed by the critics that the self cannot be a featureless X, and then various methods are devised to reconcile this assumption with

their respective theories of knowledge; and, as a consequence, the reconciliation becomes more or less strained and artificial according as the theory of knowledge is more or less precise and true.

The truth of these observations will be verified in due course. In the meantime, we may suggest that there is an important element of truth in the contention that the self, when rightly seen in the light of its place in knowledge, points beyond itself as a definable entity; hence some sort of agnosticism must be a necessary accompaniment of every theory of self that can successfully avoid the confusion of the self as the knowing subject with one of the objects which the self knows. This fatal confusion, according to Kant and Śaṅkara, is natural, it is a transcendental illusion, as the former names it, or an '*adhyāsa*,' as put by the latter. And if it can be shown that every theory that has so far denied the alleged mystery of self-consciousness, and defended the knowability of the self has done so only by confusing, either consciously or unconsciously, the transcendental ego with one of the objects of knowledge, it will at least help us to appreciate the difficulties which, according to Kant and Śaṅkara, are present in the problem of self-knowledge. The Pure Ego, the innermost subject, however, should be, for this purpose, carefully distinguished from those objects with which it is generally confused, namely, the body,

the mind, the sense-organs, etc., which may be called, following the Indian tradition, the '*koṣas*,' or, following James Ward's terminology, the objective zones. When, on the other hand, the distinction is overlooked or repudiated, we get either epiphenomenalism, or behaviourism or any other disguised form of materialism which may make its appearance in the history of thought due to the ruling conception of the age. Or, again, the confusion may lead to the theory of spiritual or mental atoms. In either case, the position of the ego remains unaltered in so far as the subject is identified with an object.

Now, confining ourselves to the history of Western philosophy, the difficulties in self-knowledge have been challenged from two different directions. Some have altogether rejected the Kantian distinction between the self as subject and the self as a substance. And having once identified the self with the brain or the nervous system, or the mind, they have no difficulty in showing that the self has nothing mysterious about it. On the other hand, those who accept the Kantian distinction as true have been equally led to doubt the existence of an insoluble difficulty in the way of self-knowledge. The self, they urge, is like the light which illumines itself as well as the objects it knows. We may call the former attitude as predominantly psychological as it looks upon know-

ledge as a relation between two entities one of which is called the self. The latter attitude, on the other hand, is predominantly epistemological in so far as it refuses to reduce the self in knowledge to one of the things known. Despite this internal incompatibility between these two attitudes, however, they have presented a united front to the agnostic theory of self. If, however, it happens to be true that agnosticism is the inevitable result of the assumption that Reality is restricted to the world of definable objects, then, it will follow that every theory of self which refuses to see any inexplicable mystery in self knowledge, while keeping the assumption unchallenged, must do so by an unconscious identification of the transcendental ego with one of the objects or things.

For an adequate appreciation of the psychological approach to the problem of knowledge, we may turn to James Ward's analysis of experience, for, he was one of those great minds in whom the philosophical sciences of the end of the last century made a lasting impression, but were not able to clog their speculative insight. And if it can be shown that Ward, despite his rejection of atomism and presentationism, could not entirely free himself from the glamour of empiricism which led him into difficulties peculiar to presentationism, that circumstance by itself may be taken as a strong ground for the presumption that the greatest

thinker is bound to fall into confusions when he tries to trace knowledge to something beyond thought and self-consciousness.

James Ward's theory of experience, though not entirely original, has the unique merit of presenting the facts with that freshness of outlook and wealth of details which can come only from an intimate acquaintance with the different departments of knowledge combined with acuteness of thought, and desire for thoroughness. As an accomplished scholar, he never fails to inspire confidence even when his reader finds it difficult to follow him. Moreover, his analysis touches upon a number of very important problems which are still in the forefront of philosophical discussions of the day, and thus affords the reader an opportunity to concentrate on the main currents of contemporary thought without the trouble of an actual wading through the multifarious currents. We select here for consideration his contribution to the theory of knowledge and even with regard to this we shall restrict ourselves to some of the most outstanding features of that theory, particularly to those which offer a strong contrast with what is generally known as the idealistic analysis of experience. The importance of such an undertaking can hardly be exaggerated. For, despite the strong tincture of idealism with which Ward's position in general is imbued, there are very significant differences between his analysis and



that of the idealists and so one of them must ultimately be abandoned as false.

Experience, for Ward, is a term which includes "all that we know and feel and do, all our facts and theories, all our emotions and ideals and ends."<sup>1</sup> The most persistent feature of experience in this sense is its duality as distinct from the dualism of matter and mind. The duality of subject and object characterizes experience at all the different stages through which it passes, and the most important point in the development of experience is reached with the dawn of self-consciousness. Epistemologists, according to Ward, have been almost always guilty of ignoring what psychological analysis has proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, namely, that there are "successive stages in the advance from the one level of experience or knowledge to the other."<sup>2</sup> Much confusion has arisen from not recognizing that "both reflexion and reasoning are the result of social intercourse, the gradual development of which has produced this gulf between man and brute." Once it is assumed that "each man by himself is rational instead of recognizing that humanity has achieved rationality," the result is a fatal confusion of psychology with epistemology. "Our human perception, or intuition of

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<sup>1</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychological Principles*, 2nd edition, p. 32.

things as expressed in language," it is urged in another connection, "is, of course, for us the nearest, the highest and the clearest." But, unfortunately, "epistemology has not merely started from the human level as it must : but it has tended to assume that this intellectual level is where knowledge itself begins"<sup>3</sup> One of the fatal consequences of this confusion is to be found in the extremely loose way in which the terms 'subjective' and 'objective' are used in epistemological treatises. What is epistemologically subjective is erroneously regarded as psychologically subjective as well, and that which is psychologically objective is also supposed to be epistemologically objective. And thus arise all the difficulties of dualism and external perception.

Psychology may avoid these confusions, Ward thinks, by clearly distinguishing between individual experience and universal experience. From its individualistic standpoint, it can show how experience at all the different levels of its development involves a relation between a knowing, feeling and active subject on the one hand, and an object on the other; and how universal experience "has grown out of, depends upon, and is really but an extension of, our primary, individual, concrete experience."<sup>4</sup> This distinction

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<sup>3</sup> *Mind*, XXVIII, 1919, p. 268.

<sup>4</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 153.

between the concrete experience of a given individual and that experience which is the result of inter-subjective intercourse "systematized and formulated by means of abstract conceptions" is at the root of the dualism of commonsense and science. But dualism can effectively be refuted by showing that conceptual experience is preceded by a type of experience in which conceptions do not figure at all, and that the trans-subjective object, far from being independent of the subjects that know it, is "rather what is common to the objects of the separate individual knowers."<sup>5</sup>

It is not necessary for our present purpose to reproduce all the arguments by which Ward seeks to establish his position outlined above, nor need we question the validity of his description of the different stages through which individual experience develops into something like an over-individual experience. The criticisms his theory has evoked in its psychological aspects—that is, as a true description of the development of individual experience as it is for the experiencing individual—are well known. But there are some very important epistemological issues involved in Ward's theory of experience, and if his contentions be true, then it is time that we should revise our attitude to certain conclusions which have so far been accepted as indubitable verities in the field

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

of epistemology. To those then we turn. And we may conveniently begin with the consideration of the individualistic standpoint which is thought to be the peculiar standpoint of psychology.

"Of all the facts with which he deals," it has been urged by Ward, "the psychologist may truly say that their *esse* is *percipi*, in so far as such facts are facts of presentation, are ideas in Locke's sense, or objects which imply a subject. Psychology, then, never transcends the limits of the individual."<sup>6</sup> Hence Psychology may quite adequately be defined as the science of individual experience. But though in this sense, 'the whole choir of heaven and furniture of earth' may belong to psychology, yet psychology cannot ignore the difference between "the standpoint of a given experience and the standpoint of its exposition,"<sup>7</sup> or, as Ward himself explains, it should not interpret the conduct of children as if they were already 'grown-up' persons.<sup>8</sup> That is, the psychologist's business is to give a systematic account of experience as it grows from one stage to another in the life-history of an individual without confusing his own standpoint with that of the experient who actually owns the experience which passes through different

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<sup>6</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

stages of development. Now, the first question that naturally suggests itself here is: how is it possible for the psychologist to abandon his own standpoint and place himself in the position of a less developed mind in order to give a faithful representation of the world as it is presented to it? This question, it may be seen, is not trivial, and Ward has to raise it and offer an explanation. "The infant," he says, "who is delighted by a bright colour does not of course conceive himself as face to face with an object; but neither does he conceive the colour as a subjective affection." And the reason evidently is that conception or, as Ward elsewhere says, experience in which concepts figure is preceded by experience in which they do not. Yet, in dealing with the infant's experience the psychologist "is bound to describe his state of mind truthfully," and this according to Ward can be very well done without "abandoning terms which have no counterpart in his consciousness," because "these terms are only used to depict that consciousness to us." This explanation, however, does not seem to remove the difficulty. If the psychologist has to give a faithful description of the child's mind when it is face to face with the bright colour, he must not introduce into his description such terms as have a meaning only for those who have reached a higher stage of development. Because, in that case, the description is not of the child's mind whatever else it

might be. The psychologist, therefore, seems to be between the horns of a dilemma. He must either stick to his own standpoint or abandon it. In the former case, he commits the 'psychologist's fallacy; while in the other case, he may be faithful to the facts but he does it at the expense of intelligibility.

Ward appears very often to prefer the latter alternative and insists on the essential unintelligibility of the lower forms of experience. Thus, to take one clear instance, the lizard's immediate experience of sunshine and warm stone occurring together, it is said, does not strictly admit of statement, yet, universal experience is "only an elaboration, though a most important elaboration" of the perceptual experience of the lizard.<sup>9</sup> This impossibility of stating clearly the lizard's experience as it is for the lizard, it may be replied, is due to the absence of those distinctions in perceptual experience which exist only at a higher stage. But this admission, taken strictly, is not compatible with Ward's conception of development as an epigenesis. We shall illustrate our point by reference to an interpretation of Ward's position given by Dawes Hicks in another connection. In explaining Ward's theory of the pure ego, and defending Ward's position against the suspicion that he was reviving the

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<sup>9</sup> *Agnosticism and Naturalism*, p. 134.

spiritualistic theory of a soul-substance, Prof. Dawes Hicks says that "wherever we have a state or mode of consciousness, there we have what may otherwise be called, using Lotze's terminology, a mode of 'being for self,' a mode of self-expression on the part of a subject that in and through such act is in some measure and to some degree aware of, or experiencing, itself. The awareness in question may be confused and indefinite to any extent, it may be no more than the first dim obscure stirrings of feeling; but the point is it is always there, and were it not, the gradual development of self-consciousness would be inexplicable."<sup>10</sup> This interpretation, we believe, may fairly be taken as a criticism of Ward's own position. If there is anything that Ward is most anxious to defend, it is this that self-consciousness is the latest stage in the development of experience, and that this development is an epigenesis. On the other hand, Dawes Hicks seeks to read into Ward's theory a conception of development which essentially consists in a process from the implicit to the explicit, from the potential to the actual. But to say that what is logically implicated is unconsciously involved in the former stage is, according to Ward, "bad psychology and assumes a scientifically unwarranted and unworkable use of the notion of

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<sup>10</sup> *Mind*, XXX, 1921, p. 5.

potentiality, <sup>1</sup> and so development must lead to the emergence of new factors that did not exist in the prior stage

The point we have raised is too important to be ignored completely or treated lightly. Once it is made clear that it is only from the standpoint of the psychologist that the individual experience is intelligible, the hard and fast line by which Ward seeks to distinguish sense-knowledge from thought-knowledge, or experience in which concepts figure and that in which they do not, disappears; and we are landed in some such theory as that which Green, for example, expounded when he said that "a natural history of self-consciousness, and of the conceptions by which it makes the world its own, is impossible."<sup>12</sup>

It is, however, well known that Ward's account of the relation of the trans-subjective stage to the previous stage of individual experience has been thought to be unsatisfactory even by such a sympathetic critic as G. F. Stout. "If thought first arises," it is said, "after previous stages which can be accounted for without it, it emerges as a radically new faculty: there is a breach of continuity. But if we examine critically Ward's treatment of the development of the individual percipient prior to the beginning of the trans-subjective stage, we find

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<sup>11</sup> *Mind*, XXVIII, p. 263.

<sup>12</sup> *Works*, I, p. 166.



that it already involves in manifold ways thought as well as sense.'<sup>13</sup> Now, we do not desire to consider the purely psychological question here. Whether, as a matter of historical fact, a given individual below the trans-subjective level has in its experience, in however crude a form, both sense and thought, it is for the psychologist to ascertain. Nor do we propose to consider the value of the psychological question for epistemology. But supposing that there is an experience which forms the subject-matter of investigation, then the question we raise is whether it is possible for the psychologist to give up his own standpoint, even when the experiencing subject whose experience he investigates stands at a lower level of development. Let us clear up the problem by means of an example. A psychologist, say, is required to give a faithful description of a flower as it is for an experient below the trans-subjective stage. The psychologist, being already at the trans-subjective level, knows the flower to be a unitary existence as distinct from other similar existing things of the world with some of which it is related spatially, temporally and causally. And his knowledge of the flower is more or less adequate accordingly as he is a physiologist or a botanist. On the other hand, the experient whose experience he

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<sup>13</sup> *The Monist*, XXVII, 1926, p. 41.

describes knows nothing of all these relations through which the psychologist knows it. Being at the sub-reflective level, the psychological subject cannot evidently have that type of knowledge of the flower which implies identification and differentiation, causal connection and spatio-temporal relations. The question then is if it is possible for the psychologist to describe the flower as it is for the psychological individual. To do so, the psychologist must be able to strip the flower of all those relations through which he knows it, and thus reduce it to something which is, in the Kantian phrase, as good as nothing for him. But if he is not to commit the "psychologist's fallacy" he must describe the flower without introducing into his description any of the relations through which alone he knows it.

In the light of these considerations, we can easily realize the appalling responsibility that is thrown on the shoulder of the psychologist, when he is constantly warned against the psychologist's fallacy, and yet asked to do the miracle of describing individual experience from the standpoint of the experiencing individual. Ward, as we have seen above, avoids this perplexity, nay, evident absurdity, by saying that when in a psychological description the term sensation, for instance, is used, it is simply meant to describe to us the individual's state of mind. But a student of Kant might similarly urge

that the category of causality, though not applicable to the 'thing-in-itself,' is used in order to describe it to us. But any one would hardly accept the reality of the thing-in-itself on the ground on which Ward asks his reader to believe in a pre-intellectual or anoetic stage of mental development. Let us then turn to the description which Ward as a psychologist offers of individual experience below the trans-subjective level.

Psychologists, it is said, "have usually represented mental advance as consisting fundamentally in the combination and recombination of various elementary units, the so-called sensations and primitive movements, in other words, as consisting in a species of 'mental chemistry.' If needful, we might find in biology far better analogies to the progressive differentiation of experience than in the physical upbuilding of molecules."<sup>14</sup> Even in higher minds, a presentation is still part of a larger whole, and "working backwards from this, as we find it now, we are led alike by particular facts and general considerations to the conception of a *totum objectivum* or objective continuum which is gradually differentiated." In many places, however, in our account of this process of differentiation, it is further said, the "only evidence apparently to which we can

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<sup>14</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 76.

safely appeal in this enquiry is that furnished by biology."<sup>15</sup> And the reason apparently is that the processes in many cases "have now proceeded so far that at the level of human consciousness we find it hard to form any tolerable clear conception"<sup>16</sup> of the lower forms of experience. But in spite of these difficulties, it is believed that we can conceive individual experience which involves the duality of subject and object: the subject confronted with a partially differentiated sensori-motor continuum. But here we are on the other horn of the dilemma, and the problem is: how can we describe such an experience from the standpoint of the experiencing individual? From the standpoint of the psychologist who stands at the intellectual level, it is of course possible, on the analogy of biological development, to conceive, though with difficulty, what the psychological individual might be. But that does not explain what its experience is for itself. The experient, for example, cannot know the objective continuum *as such*, because that would involve all those fundamental relations which, according to Ward, are much later attainments.

The only plausible answer to the question we have raised is perhaps to be found in the distinction,

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

which Ward insists on in different contexts, between sense-knowledge and thought-knowledge. Thus, for instance, in opposition to Green's dictum that a consistent sensationalism must be speechless, Ward urges that "though sense is speechless, it is not 'senseless.'"<sup>17</sup> That is, if we understand Ward aright, epistemologists have been led to deny the non-intellectual type of knowledge on account of their pre-occupation with man at the intellectual level. But though it is true that "our human perception, or intuition of things as expressed in language is, of course, for us the nearest, the highest and the clearest," yet, it is not equally true that knowledge begins only at the intellectual level. In this respect, "formal logic and sensationalist psychology have been but blind leaders of the blind. Language, which has enabled thought to advance to the level at which reflexion about thought can begin, is now an obstacle in the way of a thorough analysis of it."<sup>18</sup> But anoetic consciousness, whether or no it actually exists, "is a conceivable limit, and has the theoretical usefulness of limiting conceptions generally."<sup>19</sup> Considered in this light, the experiment at the sub-intellectual level has, it will be main-

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<sup>17</sup> *Mind*, XXVIII, p. 259.

<sup>18</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 313.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

tained, sense-knowledge of the sensori-motor continuum, and though it cannot translate its knowledge into the thought-form, yet that does not detract from the concreteness and immediacy of its non-intellectual knowledge. Far from being 'nothing,' individual experience is the primary, concrete experience, and even when the intellectual level has been attained, it is this concrete experience which provides the necessary content, the *fundamenta*, for the relating activity of the intellect. Taken by itself, this content does not give rational knowledge, and cannot explain rational experience. But "without this content the universal and necessary factors" that enter into rational experience "lapse into empty form, become as incapable of yielding experience as empty dies of minting coin."<sup>20</sup>

The answer outlined above, though not explicitly formulated by Ward, is strongly suggested by the uncompromising rigour with which he pursues the distinction between sense-knowledge and rational knowledge. We do not intend to repeat here the contentions we elaborated elsewhere about the distinction in question; but assuming the essential validity of the distinction in our experience, we ask whether on the basis of a distinction in self-conscious experience, it is possible to describe the experience

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<sup>20</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 184.

of an individual below the level of self-consciousness—an individual that is *ex hypothesi* precluded from any knowledge that implies the power to distinguish. Such an individual, restricted to the enjoyment of its immediate experience, would know nothing of the distinctions that we make between subject and object, cognition and conation, thought and feeling. Its experience *for* itself would be, to borrow Ward's phrase, a matter of being rather than of knowing. And if such beings exist at all, in what sense can we describe its experience as involving the duality of subject and object which has been accepted as the universal feature of experience? It is of course not denied that an individual may feel without knowing that it feels, there is the whole difference here between consciousness and self-consciousness. Similarly, it is not denied that the subject-object relation may be involved in an experience, though the experient knows nothing of that relation; but, then, in describing such an experience, the psychologist is not describing it as it is for the experient, and thus committing the fallacy against which he is repeatedly asked to guard himself.

The essential correctness of our contentions is implied in the explanation which Stout offers of the psychologist's fallacy. Though the psychologist is required "to give a coherent and truthful account of the development of individual experience

as it is for the experiencing individual," yet, it is admitted, "there is an essential difference between this experience itself and what the psychologist knows and seeks to know about it. His standpoint and outlook cannot be identical with those of the individual he is studying. Otherwise, in order to study a baby's mind he must himself become a baby and so cease to be a psychologist. No data, conceptions, distinctions, hypotheses are illegitimate in psychology, if and so far as they help relevantly to answer properly psychological questions.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Ward seems to suggest, in some places of his psychological account of experience, that the psychologist may give a truthful account of immediate experience even when he describes it only from his own standpoint. Thus, for instance, he admits a plurality of properties in a sensation while denying its complexity, on the ground that the psychologist can reflectively make an analysis and find out a plurality of constituents in an experience, though such an analysis is not possible for the subject of that experience. To deny this, it is said, it to overlook the difference between a psychological and a psychical analysis.<sup>22</sup> But it is not at all clear in

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<sup>21</sup> *The Monist*, XXXVI, 1920, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 105.



what sense this psychological analysis is then an analysis of experience as it is for the experiencing individual. Does it not clearly show that it is necessary for the psychologist often to view the experience he is investigating, not from the standpoint of the experiencing individual, but from that of his own? Is it not then mere sophistry, however cleverly concealed by terminological distinctions, to deny that psychology studies individual experience not necessarily from within but *ab extra*? The fact is that our knowledge of a thing or event cannot be adequate except in terms of self-conscious experience, and when therefore that event or thing is *ex hypothesi* of a nature different from what can be realized in self-consciousness, there can be no knowledge. The conditions of knowledge being absent, that thing remains inaccessible and inscrutable. And the reason is that the conditions of self-consciousness are really the conditions of knowledge.

We may then summarize this portion of our contentions as follows. The psychologist's fallacy, as explained by our eminent psychologists, far from being a defect to be removed from psychological descriptions, enters necessarily into all intelligible description of facts. In describing and explaining mental events, in tracing the development of experience from one stage to another, or in analysing a complex psychosis into its constituent elements, the psycho-

logist can as little lay aside his intellectual mechanism as a mason can put away his tool in building an edifice. And the demand that a psychologist should guard himself against the psychologist's fallacy and describe individual experience from the standpoint of the experiencing individual is as impossible to meet as the demand that he should describe the indescribable or think of the unthinkable. This of course does not mean that a genetic study of mental facts is foredoomed to failure. On the contrary, the genetic method, we believe, has been of immense value in psychology as much as in other departments of knowledge. Its special fitness for the study of mind lies in the simple fact that mind is essentially a process, a growth. But it is equally important to remember that in following the mind through the different stages of its development, the psychologist has to reconstruct its process, and is, therefore, inevitably bound down by the conditions of reconstruction. No knowledge, specially no knowledge of the past, is possible except through a constructive activity on the part of the knower. That the past is not immediately given, but has to be constructed out of what is given, ought to be now a commonplace of philosophy. And then it follows that the psychologist in tracing the growth of mind must of necessity construct or, say, reconstruct the past history of the mental evolution. And from this it follows

further that what defies reconstruction cannot be described in intelligible terms.

What prevents Ward from clearly realizing this truth is perhaps his pre-occupation with biological concepts. Having rightly insisted on the duality, as distinct from the dualism, of experience, he has no difficulty in exposing the shortcomings of mechanical and chemical categories in the description of mind and mental evolution. But he still continues to represent the subject-object relation as something like the relation between the organism and its environment. The subject with the capacity to feel and act, and armed with the single power of attention, is represented as confronting a sensori-motor continuum, almost in the same way in which an organism is confronted with its environment. It is true that the essential distinction between these two types of relation is sometimes recognized, and then it is said that experience is life as it is for the living individual, and not like the "interaction of organism and environment with which the so-called biologist is exclusively concerned, and where both organism and environment are objects for a distinct observer."<sup>23</sup> And then it is rightly urged that in respect of the subject-object relation, as the absolutely ultimate

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<sup>23</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, II, p. 111.

relation within experience we can either say that it is inexplicable, or that it needs no explanation, or we may entertain the notion of an absolute, in whom the unity of experience outlasts the duality.”<sup>24</sup> These alternative courses, however, are not followed by Ward. They are, according to him, preferable courses in comparison with that which brings the subject-object relation under the category of cause and effect. Experience, Ward seems to think, vouchsafes only interaction, and not causal relation between subject and object. “Given a subject, or centre of experience, and such an objective complement; then the most salient feature is their interaction; the feelings that objective changes induce in the subject, and the actions to which such feeling leads.”<sup>25</sup> Now, interaction is essentially a biological category, and it is difficult to see how, in spite of its superiority to the category of cause and effect, it can effectively disarm the force of the criticism which Ward has brought to bear upon the cause-effect category as representing the subject-object relation. If the subject-object relation is presupposed by and therefore not explicable in terms of cause and effect, is it any the more explicable under the category of inter-

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

action? Does not the latter category presuppose as much the subject-object relation as the former?

The fact seems to be that Ward has not done sufficient justice to his insight that the subject-object relation is ultimate. Being under the fascinating influence of a new fruitful discovery, he was naturally blind to its limitations, and so fondly clung to the biological category of interaction in explaining not only what was imperfectly explained by the mechanical and the chemical categories, but in explaining even that ultimate relation which is presupposed by every specific relation within experience. While rightly discovering the absurdity of identifying the subject of experience with the organism "which is but a special object among others."<sup>26</sup> while realizing that it would be "a mistake to seek to explain the individuality of the psychological subject by reference to the individuality of the organism,"<sup>27</sup> and lastly while detecting the fatal ambiguity of the term mind or ego as meaning "the unity or continuity of consciousness," as well as, the subject to which this unity is presented,<sup>28</sup> Ward fails to work out all the implications of his position, mainly on account of a strong biological bias.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>27</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39, also p. 423.

This brings us once more to the contrast, which Ward is never tired of insisting on, between the standpoint of psychology and that of epistemology, and particularly the contrast of the psychological *a priori* with the epistemological *a priori*. It is one of his repeated warnings that we must not confuse the concept of space-time with the experience of space-time. "That the knowledge of space" he urges "is *a priori* in the epistemological sense it is no concern of the psychologist either to assert or to deny."<sup>29</sup> Now, can we not equally say, reversing Ward's remark, "that the knowledge of space-time is not psychologically *a priori* it is no concern of the epistemologist either to assert or to deny?" So far as the psychological question is concerned Ward's account may be true or, again, it may be false as shown by Stout, who is uncompromising in holding that "this merely sensuous unity is not sufficient" for explaining the growth of the knowledge of external world.<sup>30</sup> But we must recognize, he urges, that from the outset there must be "some germinal apprehension of the unity of the world," and that "such categories as spatial unity, temporal unity, causal unity belong even to rudimentary perceptual consciousness as a condition of its further development"

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>30</sup> *Manual of Psychology*, 4th edition, p. 413.

Nor again are we to decide on the psychological validity of Ward's explanation of space-perception in contrast with that of another eminent psychologist of our time who holds that there can be no perception of space without the constructive activity of mind "to which the sense-stimulations and the qualities of sensory experience that immediately follow upon them are the provocation."<sup>31</sup> From these alternative theories of space-perception, we may, however, see clearly that it is futile to appeal to psychology even of the most modern type in order to expose the defects of Kant's account of space as epistemologically *a priori*.

The question that is all-important from the standpoint of knowledge is whether space-time is not involved in any account of the growth of individual experience which passes through different levels of development, and whether the conceived space-time is not objectively real in contradistinction from the 'concrete perceptual' space-time. The objective reality of time as a succession of events, for instance, is presupposed by every psychologist who ventures to give a genetic account of experience, and then it is not in terms of the time *as perceived* but in terms of the time *as conceived* that the genetic account becomes intelligible. The concept may be, as Ward

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<sup>31</sup> McDougall, *Outline of Psychology*, p. 245.

would have us believe at once *abstract* and *ideal* but it is in terms of the conceptual time alone and not in terms of the Bergsonian duration, that the gradual and successive development of experience can be understood. Are we then to reject the conceived time as "the pendant of geometry?" Can development be understood except in terms of the "abstract time of science in which we imagine the successive states of the whole phenomenal world to be plotted out?"<sup>32</sup> In fact, however, Ward himself suggests that the real time is what we conceive it to be, and says explicitly that whatever may be our intuition of time, the time as we conceive it is time *as it is*. But if this be granted, then epistemology, far from presupposing psychology, is really presupposed by psychology;<sup>33</sup> and reflection, even if it be something which comes to be at a particular stage of the development of individual experience, is the medium through which alone an objective development is intelligible. In other words, conceptual knowledge is not abstract in the derogatory sense of being something that gives us a partial view of reality or a false view of real things. And it follows also that

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<sup>32</sup> *The Realm of Ends*, p. 305.

<sup>33</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 203. Italics in the original. Cf. Stout: Objective time is thus an ideal construction—*Manual of Psychology*, 4th edition, p. 568.



to talk of a correspondence between conceptual knowledge and reality is to court misunderstanding, suggesting as it does a different type of knowledge through which reality exists for us, with which we are to compare our conceptual constructions. If, on the other hand, it is found that even the staunchest critic of conceptual knowledge has to construct in spite of himself and thus assume implicitly the validity of conceptual constructions, this by itself is a transcendental type of proof showing the *a priori* validity of concepts as also the futility of instituting a comparison between conceptual knowledge and reality.

The fact is that concepts, as Kant urged long ago, are rules that unify knowledge and there can be no knowledge without a concept "however indefinite or obscure it may be." And the ultimate source of the conceptual constructions is the subject that knows, call it the pure ego or the transcendental unity of apperception. Now, there is no doubt that Ward too admits in a sense that the experient subject is the source of the real categories of substance and cause, and that "the world is *intelligible* only when it is interpreted in terms of what the experient subject at the trans-subjective and self-conscious level knows itself to be."<sup>34</sup> But then he interprets

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<sup>34</sup> A *Study of Kant*, p. 83.

these categories in the anthropomorphic sense and thinks that all Kant meant by the transcendental conditions of knowledge is this that the "permanence and activity of the subject itself are analogically projected,"<sup>35</sup> at the transcendental level of experience. And if this be the upshot of Kant's reply to Hume, then we must agree with the critics of Kant in the remark that Kant's vast transcendental machinery is a signal failure.<sup>36</sup> For, Hume would have surely retorted that "to convince us how fallacious this reasoning is, we need only consider, that the will being here considered as a cause has no more a discoverable connection with its effects than any material cause has with its proper effect."<sup>37</sup> We venture to think, however, that Kant's transcendental conditions of experience are not the anthropomorphic projections at the transcendental level of experience. On the contrary, they are the presuppositions of even the anthropomorphic projections. That is, Kant's reply to Ward would be essentially the same as his reply to Hume. All descriptions of the origin of the categories, he would say in effect, can be intelligible only in terms of the categories themselves, and consequently must be vitiated by "a sort of

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>36</sup> J. H. Stirling's article in *Mind*, 1885.

<sup>37</sup> *Treatise*, I, iii. xv.

*generatio aequivoca*, and this irrespective of the modes in which they are supposed to have originated. Whether the categories are described as having originated from the habits of imagination or from the anthropomorphic projection, the psychologist assumes the universal validity of the causal principle in the logical sense, in so far as he is thinking of the *origin* of the categories as a real fact of the world.

There are certain other aspects of Ward's philosophy in respect of which also he may truly be regarded as the mouth-piece of the spirit of the age, but we are not concerned with them in the present context. We may, however, conclude with a warning against a possible misinterpretation of our criticism of Psychology. Nothing we have so far said is meant to decide on the merits of the competing theories about the psychology of knowledge as it is conceived now. Whether all knowing begins with sensory experience or with experience referred to something beyond itself, it is for the psychologist to discover. Similarly, it is none of our purposes either to defend or to attack the widely respected opinion that, as a matter of history, the self-conscious level has been attained at a particular stage of the psychological individual's development.

All we have attempted to show is that a psychology of knowledge must necessarily presuppose the validity of those ultimate principles which lie at the

basis of thought and existence. That is, even if it be granted that self-consciousness together with the formative principles of knowledge come to exist at a particular stage in the development of individual experience, we cannot consider this fact as a ground for rejecting the findings of the self-conscious individual who necessarily interprets facts in accordance with the logical categories. The psychologist himself, for instance, is at the self-conscious level, and his description of "the successive stages in the advance from the one level of experience or knowledge to the other" must be in terms of the categories in the logical sense, and he will surely repudiate the suggestion that the description is purely anthropomorphic and, as such, may or may not correspond to real facts. If then it is admitted that the individual experiences which he describes are real facts in the world, and if it be further admitted that he cannot accept the Lockian opposition of what is real to what we "make for ourselves," then the logical categories must be in the individual experiences though the individual may not be fully conscious of them. Ward admits that the human standpoint is the highest and the nearest to us, but the question is not in fact one of temporal relation between one stage of development and another. The problem rather is whether any description can be made intelligible except in terms of the categories, and whether every description

should not assume the objective validity of the categories. Further, if we agree with Ward that the subject of experience, though last in the order of knowledge is yet first in the order of existence, should we not extend this insight to the case of the categories as well?

A psychology that denies these plain considerations must be inevitably landed in the inextricable difficulties of naturalism and agnosticism. The spectre of the Thing-in-itself being the inevitable consequence of the attempts to limit thought within a part of reality, it is bound to visit us as often as we raise a wall between thought and reality, irrespective of the point at which it is erected. We may either limit thought within the field of appearance, or within the four walls of trans-subjective experience, the logic of the situation remains the same. And while the logic remains unchallenged, it is immaterial whether we are engaged in tracing the evolution of mind from matter or that of thought from sense. If the absolute homogeneity of Herbert Spencer be, as Ward rightly remarks, equal to nothing, then his own proposal to begin with a mere sensori-motor continuum cannot meet with a better prospect. We need not here prejudge the issue that divides the temporalist from the eternalist, and consider how far the recognition of the failure of psychology to trace the genesis of the logical categories should commit

one to Green's theory of an Eternal Intelligence and whether Green's is the only alternative to naturalism and agnosticism. But we believe he was essentially right in his incisive remarks on the pretensions of psychology to offer a satisfactory theory of knowledge.

The difficulties which we have so far tried to detect in Ward's psychological attitude to the problem of knowledge are crystallized in his theory of self. The subject-object relation which, according to him, characterizes experience at every stage gives birth necessarily to an agnostic doctrine of self, because he never gives up his initial assumption that experience is a relation between two determinate entities one of which is the subject. Such an assumption must spell disaster to every theory of self, and the puzzles and paradoxes which it involves are nowhere more explicitly brought out than in Ward's treatment of self-consciousness.

His solution of the problem of self-consciousness, to put it briefly, consists in pointing out that if we begin with self "represented by concentric objective zones, sensory, ideational, personal, spiritual" we at last end with a *focus imaginarius*, which, though "suggested by the structure of experience, is not only devoid of all 'content' in fact, but is necessarily so devoid from its very nature as a limiting concept—like its analogue the point, that which has position

but neither parts nor magnitude. This concept of the Pure Ego, or I, in other words, is the limit to which the empirical Ego points."<sup>38</sup> What then, asks Ward, "can be the meaning of talking of a 'pure subject' to whom it is all presented?"

Ward himself admits that his own answer to this question, though psychologically simple, may fail far "of being speculatively adequate." And it has been urged by Prof. G. F. Stout that "as an account of the development of the self and of self-consciousness, Ward's work is here admirable and ought to be carefully studied by every psychologist. But considered as an attempt to meet his own theoretical problem of how the pure ego, as such, can be known at all, it seems to me to be a brilliant failure."<sup>39</sup> For, how can the pure ego "be known at all, seeing that in becoming known, it must become an object and so cease to be pure subject?" Even an indirect knowledge of the pure ego is impossible, because "the pure ego is supposed to be initially invisible," and it follows logically that we can know, either directly or indirectly, "only its presentational doubles" which are not the pure ego but only "presentational wrappings which mask and disguise it." "Into the empty form of consciousness," says Ward, "our

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<sup>38</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 377.

<sup>39</sup> *The Monist*, Vol. XXXVI, 1926, p. 47

being fits <sup>40</sup> But how can it be *known* to fit if all that is known is the empty form, the positive content not being known but merely experienced <sup>41</sup>

We need not examine the alternative method, suggested by Stout, of "giving up" the conception of the pure ego altogether, and substituting in its place the unity of a complex whole, partly because we have already sufficiently exposed the fallacy of confusing the subject with the mind, and we believe that nothing less than this confusion is involved in identifying the unity of the self, considered as the ultimate presupposition of experience, with "the unity of the total complex of its experiences."<sup>42</sup> But apart from the question of the tenability of his positive doctrine, his statement of the problem of self-consciousness, we think, is as clear as it can possibly be. And if our previous contentions be correct, then the pure ego, notwithstanding the difficulties which it leads to, is the inexpugnable postulate of all knowledge and experience.

Despite the difficulties, however, Ward's account of the pure ego has a unique importance. Because, it seems that of all the contemporary thinkers who

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<sup>40</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, p. 381.

<sup>41</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> Prof. Stout, *Some Fundamental Points in the Theory of Knowledge*, p. 6.



have approached the study of mind exclusively from the standpoint of psychology, he has the merit of keeping his eyes wide open to the perplexities which beset the psychological approach and of offering solutions in so far as such solutions are possible at all within the limitations of a special science. As a psychologist he has, for instance, to present a scientific account of the nature and growth of individual experience, and this commits him to treat the subject of experience as one object or thing among other things, much as a physicist or a biologist treats the materials of his investigation connecting them in multifarious directions in space and time. And as a biologist, in interpreting his data, has to take the help of a different order of categories from that which the physicist employs, owing to the special nature of his subject-matter, so Ward too, as a psychologist, has to bring into his service a number of notions peculiar to his subject-matter and expose the insufficiency of mere physical and chemical analogies in interpreting the growth of individual experience. Nevertheless, he is not blind to the difficulties of such a procedure which he seeks to surmount by forcing Kant to tell a psychological tale. Thus, while repudiating all attempts to bring the subject-object relation under any other subordinate relation, he continues to view it as analogous to the relation between an organism and its environment, and inter-

action is explicitly stated to be the most salient feature of the subject-object relation. We need not repeat here what has already been said in this respect. Ward, as we have contended, has failed to do justice to his speculative insight owing to a strong biological predilection. When, however, he comes to deal directly with the nature of the pure ego and the possibility of self-consciousness, he makes a desperate attempt to rise above his prepossessions. The subject, then, is no more described as a thing distinguished from other things by the capacity to feel, act and attend in relation to a sensori-motor continuum. On the contrary, it reduces itself to a limiting concept to which the empirical ego points, an empty form, a *focus imaginarius*.

Thus Ward's exposition of self-consciousness suffers from a vacillating attitude which seems to arise from his attempt to reconcile the best teachings of epistemology with the findings of psychology. But the epistemological and the psychological attitudes are as distant from each other as the north pole from the south pole, and the result is that his analysis has failed to satisfy the psychologist as much as the epistemologist. Bradley, for example, has made some very serious observations on Ward's position which go to the root of the matter. The puzzles of consciousness and self-consciousness, we are told, are due to "the internal difficulties of the relation and its

terms, and then again in the fact of the relation it self."<sup>43</sup> The difficulties, according to Bradley, arise in the following way. "We have an object, a something given, and it is given to the subject. Is the subject given? No, for, if so, it would itself be an object. We seem, then, to have one term and a relation without a second term. But can there be a relation with one term? No, this appears to be self-contradictory, and, if we assert it, we must justify and defend our paradox. But, again, can a term be known only as a term of a relation or relations, while it is not, in any respect, known otherwise? No, once more; this is impossible, and in the end unmeaning. Terms are never constituted entirely by a relation or relations . . . But, once more, can we have a relation, one term of which is contained in the experienced and the other not? No; for a term, which is not in some sense experienced, seems nothing at all."<sup>44</sup>

It is probably under the force of these searching criticisms that Ward had to distinguish between experience and knowledge. The pure ego, he says, though first in the order of existence is, yet, last in the order of knowledge. But this knowledge is not, as he is careful to explain, knowledge in the sense in which

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<sup>43</sup> *Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 195.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

it implies an object. Experience is wider than knowledge in the strict sense, and the pure ego, though within experience, cannot be known as an object. But the difficulty, we believe, cannot be met in this way and Ward seems to win an easy victory over his critic, by pushing back the problem. For, the question remains how, if experience always involves a subject-object relation, it is possible to experience the subject without turning it into an object. There can be no experience without a subject—this is the corner-stone of Ward's analysis of experience; and it follows from this that the subject to be experienced must have another subject, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The fact is that these difficulties are insurmountable as long as the subject-object relation is regarded as a relation between two things, and Ward, in spite of his insistence on the unique nature of this ultimate relation, has the tendency, sometimes too clear to be ignored, to represent it as analogous to any other relation *within* knowledge. And so far as he does so, the remarks of such competent critics as Stout and Bradley will remain unchallengeable. On the other hand, when his attitude advances from the psychological to the epistemological plane—and this, be it remembered, he can only do by forgetting the results of his previous analysis—his position is unassailable. The pure subject, he then urges, is

not to be confused with the concentric objective zones such as the sensory, the ideational, the personal or the spiritual ego. The latter, as Prof. Stout aptly describes them, are but presentational wrappings which mask and disguise the pure ego. As every presentation implies a subject to which it is presented, all attempts to grasp the subject as a presentation will necessarily end in giving us, not the pure ego, but only its presentational misnomer, and it matters little in the long run whether the presentation be the so-called bodily self, the ideational self, or the spiritual self.

## THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL THEORY

The psychological theories of self which all agree in conceiving it to be one thing among other things and in refusing to distinguish between the subject of knowledge and what is generally called 'mind' were found, on examination, to have obscured the knowledge situation owing to their failure to recognise clearly and consistently that knowledge is the medium through which all that is real must reveal itself, and that knowledge, in the strict sense, implies interpretation according to certain ultimate principles which on that very account are principles of existence as well. The most fundamental of these principles, we have maintained, is a synthesising or interpreting subject which being the source of all the fundamental concepts imbedded in the objects of knowledge cannot itself be an object. The psychological theories, in ignoring this important truth, have been under the influence of a sort of error which may be called, after Kant, a transcendental illusion. This illusion we have seen to have its origin in the difficulty of overcoming our inveterate habit of conceiving the subject-object relation on the analogy of inter-objective relations, and thus forgetting that every relation between

one object and another must necessarily imply their relation to a subject, and hence the latter relation is not on the same footing as the former. Under the influence of this habit the subject has inevitably come to be conceived as a thing and knowledge as an attribute.

As we now pass on to the consideration of the epistemological theories, we may begin by concentrating on the fundamental agreement between their contentions and those which we have so far tried to justify. It is well known that the post-Kantian idealists, whatever be their differences from Kant in other respects, are at one with him in recognising the important distinction between the self as an ultimate unity presupposed in all knowledge and the self as one of the objects of knowledge. In other words, the psychological approach to the problem of self and other allied problems of knowledge have been always condemned as unsatisfactory by those who are generally known as the neo-Kantians or the neo-Hegelians owing to the varying degrees of similarity between their contentions and those of Kant and Hegel. The most significant of the contentions which bind them to Kant and Hegel, however, is, at least in so far as our present purpose is concerned, that the subject is not a substance and that knowledge is not a quality. And if our previous contentions be correct, then the epistemological theories represent so far a distinct

advance upon the psychological theories of self, and the theories of knowledge which have not lost sight of this basic truth must consequently be much more adequate than any theory which consciously or unconsciously identifies the subject with substance. If, however, this similarity is significant, equally significant is the disparity which exists between Kant and the post-Kantian idealists, and which has led to a partial modification of the Kantian account of self and to a more or less emphatic rejection of the puzzles of self-consciousness as formulated by Kant.

We have already ventured the suggestion that there is perhaps no *via media* between the theory of ego, as lying beyond relational experience and consequently defying all definite knowledge, and the theory which, either overtly or covertly, considers the ego on the analogy of a thing and thus commits the transcendental illusion. In other words, the recognition of a noumenal supra-relational ego is forced upon us in proportion to the success with which we are able to remove the transcendental illusion from our account of the knowledge situation, and hence there can be no third alternative theory in addition to that which accepts the noumenal ego and that which regards the ego in knowledge as a particular substance. It now remains to see how far the post-Kantian idealists have succeeded in steering clear of these alternatives; and, in fact, the epistemological theories



do claim to offer a third alternative. For, if they seek to avoid, on the one hand, the mistake of identifying the subject of knowledge with a particular mind or the empirical ego, they are equally anxious to repudiate the grounds which landed Kant in an inextricable quandary regarding the possibility of self-consciousness. It is true that a reality beyond the spatio-temporal world forms almost the bed-rock of the idealistic speculations after Kant and Hegel, and this reality is reached generally through an analysis of the function of the ego in knowledge. But, it is denied with more or less definiteness of emphasis that this ego is such as to preclude the possibility of definite knowledge. The ego, it is held, far from being unknowable, is the knowable *par excellence*, though it is not one object among others. This position, however, as we shall see presently, has been held by different thinkers with unequal emphasis on the two points both of which are equally important for its successful exposition. As a result, some have laid a greater stress on the difference between the ego and the world of things, and have proportionately sacrificed the force of the second point, namely, that the ego is knowable. Those, on the other hand, who have accentuated the knowability of the ego have come perilously near conceiving it on the analogy of things that are constituents of the world of knowledge. This uncomfortable tendency to invest one of the two vital

points with logical cogency by proportionately weakening the strength of the other is clearly noticeable in the development of post-Kantian idealism; and for a detailed justification of this contention we must now turn to two of the chief representatives of this valuable school of thought.

The logical see-saw which has been described above as arising from the attempt to hold together the theory of a knowable ego with the distinction of the self as subject from the self as a substance may be traced back to Green with whom practically begins that masterly treatment of knowledge which has been the source of inspiration for a number of subsequent thinkers of the idealistic school. It will be needless to enter with any detail into his theory of knowledge to which we had had already a number of occasions to refer in confirmation of our own contentions. In insisting on the impossibility of subsuming the subject of knowledge under those formal conceptions of which it is the source, in repudiating the notion of knowledge as a quality of a particular substance, in showing the self-refutation of every attempt to represent knowledge in terms of something other than itself,—he has laid the foundation of an epistemological analysis which may truly be called the *prolegomena* to every system of sound metaphysics. It is, however, when he comes to deal specifically with the nature of the self or the principle of union that is

presupposed in all knowledge that his guidance becomes unsteady, though, even here, it does not altogether fail us.

It has become a commonplace with Green's students that the knowledge as well as the existence of Nature, according to his analysis, presupposes a unity of consciousness which is the source of those conceptions through which the world of facts exists. This consciousness or principle of unity is the ultimate condition which explains the possibility of that mutual relations or determination without which knowledge of objects would be unrealised and unrealisable. For that very reason, however, the ultimate principle of unity cannot be one of the related facts. If it is agreed that knowledge "consists in the establishment of relations between data of sensibility," then, he tells us, it can be ascertained by reflective analysis that "the existence of a knowable nature implies that of a principle of union which is not itself part of the knowable nature, not one or any number of the relations which constitute it; an unconditioned, in relation to which alone the mutual conditioning of phenomena is possible; a consciousness of laws of nature, or rather a principle of consciousness which, in relation to sensibility, yields laws of nature, which is not itself subject to those laws of nature."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, it is urged in another

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<sup>1</sup> *Works*, II, p. 90

context that the really prolific element in Kant's theory of knowledge is the view of the noumenon "which he calls the ego, as the source of the categories" and which on that account cannot be brought under categories.<sup>2</sup> Locke's contradictions, Green points out elsewhere, are due to his "avowed enterprise of knowing that which renders knowledge possible as he might know any other object."<sup>3</sup> What Locke fails to see in this connection is that every "interrogator of the individual consciousness seeks to know that consciousness, and just for that reason must find in it at every stage those formal conceptions, such as substance and cause, without which there can be no object of knowledge at all. . . . He cannot state anything that he knows save in terms which imply that substance and relation are in the things known. . . . If nature is the object, he must find them in nature; if his own self-consciousness, he must find them in that consciousness."<sup>4</sup> Hence the principle of unity which is the source of the conceptions of substance and cause and which is implied in the interrogator's attempt to know "the individual consciousness" cannot be itself one of the conditioned things of the knowable nature

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, III, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, I, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Green's conclusions about this ultimate principle of unity are stated in a far clearer language in a well-known section of the *Prolegomena*. "That there is such a consciousness," he tells us, "is implied in the existence of the world, but *what* it is we only know through its so far acting in us as to enable us, however partially and interruptedly, to have knowledge of a world or an intelligent experience"<sup>5</sup> Green is here evidently thinking of his Spiritual Principle; but as he holds with a number of eminent idealists that ours is "a limited mode" of "the world-consciousness," his remarks hold good equally of what is generally called the human consciousness in that aspect of it in which it is the principle of unity presupposed in all knowledge. As he himself points out, the self-distinguishing consciousness which is the condition of nature "is one which, on however limited a scale, we ourselves exercise in the acquisition of experience, and exercise only by means of such a consciousness"<sup>6</sup> This, according to Green, is all that we are entitled to say positively about that something which is the ultimate condition of nature. "We are further entitled to say of it, negatively," he remarks significantly, "that the relations by which, through its action, phenomena are determined are not relations of

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<sup>5</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

it not relations by which it is itself determined. They arise out of its presence to phenomena, or the presence of phenomena to it, but the very condition of their thus arising is that the unifying consciousness which constitutes them should not itself be one of the objects so related."

Such passages can be infinitely multiplied from Green's works to show that he was fully alive to the logical consequence of his analysis of knowledge. The subject-object relation, if properly grasped, must inevitably lead to the conception of a noumenal ego which itself is but a limiting concept without a positive content. This Ego, in the words of James Ward, is "the limit to which the empirical Ego points";<sup>7</sup> but in itself is a mere "*focus imaginarius*," that cannot be known in the same way as we know an object. Indeed, the possibility of knowing the Ego is precluded by Green's entire analysis of knowledge, and this has been repeatedly pointed out by his critics. The Ego, here, reduces itself to "the bare geometrical point," as Balfour puts it,<sup>8</sup> or "the ideal focus," as A. S. Pringle-Pattison aptly describes it.<sup>9</sup> The critics, however, have generally considered this to be the

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<sup>7</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 377.

<sup>8</sup> *Mind*, Vol. IX, p. 89.

<sup>9</sup> *The idea of God*, p. 199. Cf. also *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 28.

weakest point in Green's position, and from this they have, rather hastily, inferred the fallacious character of "any argument from the conditions of knowledge to the theorem of an All-Thinker and of the universe as the system of his thought." "What difference does it make," asks A. S. Pringle-Pattison, "whether we regard nature as existing *per se*, or insist that all her processes are registered in a mind, if that mind is nothing but such a register or impartial reflection of the facts?"<sup>10</sup> The answer, we believe, is not far to seek, provided we remember Green's premises. A philosophical conclusion is different from a mere unmediated belief. Beliefs may be generated in a number of ways, they may be, in the words of Francis Bacon, *idola tribus, fori, specus, theatri*; and so, as it has been more recently contended, "pure insight and logic, whatever they might do ideally, are not the only things that really do produce our creeds."<sup>11</sup> Yet, no belief which is not rationally justifiable is entitled to the name of a philosophical creed. To ignore this distinction between an unmediated and a mediated belief is to fall into that suicidal scepticism which was first propounded by the great sophists and has been revived in our time by the pragmatists who would expect us to accept the pragmatic theory as providing

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>11</sup> W. James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 11.

the only *absolute* standard of truth. On the other hand, when the absurdity of the pragmatist theory of truth claiming an absolute validity is realised, it will be clear that a philosophical creed must ultimately produce its logical credentials.

In fact, however, these contentions are not denied by A. S. Pringle-Pattison who agrees that the ultimate principles of knowledge, such as "the principle of intellectual coherence," "we must and do accept as absolute." for, it is "a necessity of reason involved in the possibility of knowing anything—involvement therefore in all practical living as well as in the immovable belief in law and order which inspires all scientific investigation."<sup>12</sup> But if so much is granted, then, we cannot condemn "the direct argument from the conditions of knowledge" as yielding only nugatory conclusions. For, the principle of intellectual coherence is as much the result of the "direct argument" as the ego which is the principle of unity presupposed in "the possibility of knowing anything." Now, whether this ego should be called an empty form or not depends upon the extent to which we have succeeded in avoiding the confusion of the principle of unity involved in all knowledge with one of the knowable objects, or, what is the same thing in a different language, the confusion of the subject-object relation

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<sup>12</sup> *Loc. cit* , p, 239.



with an inter-objective relation. We need not repeat the arguments which Green brings forward against such confusions. To those who are of his way of thinking, he says, "all knowing and all that is known all intelligence and intelligible reality, indifferently consist in a relation between subject and object."<sup>13</sup> Hence, the subject cannot be known in the same way as the object, though it is the inexpugnable basis of all knowledge, and all intelligible reality. This, far from being a defect in his theory of knowledge, is, when properly understood, an indication of the thoroughness with which he pursued his analysis to its legitimate conclusion.

Though, however, we reach this agnostic conclusion about the nature of the ego under Green's guidance, yet, as we have remarked above, he does not always keep steadfastly to this result of his own arguments, and then, probably under the influence of the Hegelian atmosphere which came to establish itself at Oxford at that time, he did not hesitate to characterise what ought to be a mere empty form according to his own analysis as a spiritual self-conscious being of which all that is real is the activity or expression "The subject in virtue of the act, the object in virtue of the manifestation, are alike and in strict correlativity so far determined." Now, such language

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<sup>13</sup> *Works*, I, p. 386.

may be interpreted in two different senses, and the wrong sense has a better chance of acceptance because it is in accord with our habitual ways of thinking. It may mean, that is, that the subject is real in the same sense as any knowable object may ever be, and that it is known as such a reality. This, however, would be in direct contradiction to his repeated assertions that the subject cannot be known in the same way as the object, that it cannot be brought under the conceptions of cause, substance and other categories through which the objects exist, that all intelligible reality indifferently consists in a relation between subject and object. If we follow his arguments here, then, even the spiritual reality, in so far as it is an intelligible reality, must presuppose the subject-object relation, and so must fall on the side of the object. And the correlativity which is said to exist between the subject and the object must be also carefully distinguished from the correlativity that may exist between one object and another. Yet, Green's language has the tendency to suggest that the spiritual principle and its correlativity are not essentially different from the things and the relations which constitute the objective world. Thus, while insisting in different contexts that the ultimate principle of union is "an unconditioned," and, as such, different from "any number of the relations which-constitute" the knowable nature, he urges at the same time that the cor-

relativity of subject and object is such that "every determination of the one implies a corresponding determination of the other." That is, while there are passages in which the ultimate principle is rightly taken to be unconditioned, and indeterminable, there are others where it is thought to be determinable and so far conditioned.

The fact seems to be that this oscillation on the part of Green arose out of his attempt to give a positive content to what his own impartial analysis of knowledge tended to show to be a mere empty form. "The principle of union" or "the principle of consciousness," the existence of which is discovered through "reflective analysis" has none of those determinations which make the objects knowable, and so to characterise that principle further as spiritual, or as being in necessary relation to the world of objects, is to state more than the reflective analysis warrants. The law of contradiction, for instance, is ascertained through a reflective analysis of the actual process of thinking, and in so far as it is implied in every assertion it may rightly be called an eternal principle of thinking. But this does not help us to determine the nature of that which is the presupposition of the reflective analysis itself. As Green has put it himself, the formal conceptions are found in every object of knowledge—"If nature is the object, he must find them in nature; if his own self-consciousness, he must find

them in that consciousness." And consequently, these formal conceptions through which nature as well as self-consciousness exists cannot be applied to the subject for which they exist as objects. Green's critics, therefore, we believe, are essentially right when they protest against the metaphysical transformation of Kant's transcendental ego into an Absolute Spirit. It was reserved for Kant's successors, W. James tells us, to convert Kant's notion of *Bewusstsein überhaupt*, or abstract consciousness, into one infinite concrete self-consciousness which is the soul of the world and in which our sundry personal self-consciousnesses have their being.<sup>14</sup> But, in the words of Prof. A. Seth, "it must be in the highest degree improper to convert consciousness in general without more ado into a universal consciousness . . . We can have absolutely no right to transform the logical identity of type into a numerical identity of existence."<sup>15</sup>

When, however, we follow the general trend of his thought without emphasising the conflicting modes in which it is expressed, Green appears, on the whole, to value the distinction between the self as a subject and the self as a substance together with its logical corollary that the self cannot

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<sup>14</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 449.

<sup>15</sup> *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 32.

be known more than the theory of a knowable Absolute or an Eternal Spiritual Principle, though he is generally known as one of the absolutists whose chief task is to expound and justify the reality of a Universal Consciousness. And it is true that the bulk of his philosophical discourses is occupied with the theory of an Eternal Spiritual Principle which is the basis of his ethical and political conclusions; yet, this Spiritual Principle, according to his own express view, is not knowable except in the negative sense that it is not one of the objects that constitute nature. That this negative aspect of the doctrine is more predominant in Green's philosophy than what he says positively is also apparent from the criticism which it has evoked even from E. Caird regarding whose relation to Green it has been remarked: "Seldom have there been in the history of philosophy two men who so entirely entered into each other's mind and so entirely understood each other."<sup>16</sup> We pass on, then, to the masterly analysis of self-consciousness by E. Caird who is by common consent looked upon as the most reliable exponent of English neo-Hegelianism.

E. Caird's views on self and self-consciousness have a unique importance for the obvious reason

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<sup>16</sup> Prof. Muirhead, *Life and Philosophy of Edward Caird*, p. 131.

that he is not only one of the most accredited exponents of post-Kantian idealism, and consequently of the epistemological theory of self, but his strenuous effort to present the Kantian philosophy in a systematic form brought him into a more intimate touch with the different aspects and tendencies of Kant's thought than could be expected of any critic who would concentrate more or less on a limited portion of the Critical Philosophy. Caird's views represent the logical see-saw from the other side. That is, while Green's analysis of knowledge brought into prominence the agnostic side of the epistemological theory of self by its frequent insistence on the difference between subject and mind, Caird is compelled by the logic of the situation to throw this distinction into the background on account of his strong repugnance to any philosophical tenet that smacks of agnosticism. He would fain accept the distinction between the self as a noumenal condition of experience and the self as an empirical ego existing and developing in time, provided, and so long as, the noumenal ego is not raised above all the conditions of knowledge and experience as we discover them by an actual analysis. Thus, when pious feeling exaggerates "the division between divine and human, and even fears to admit the possibility of the intelligence of man apprehending in any sense the nature of God," Caird would remind us that in that case "religion

would be an impossibility.<sup>17</sup> It is no wonder, therefore, that he will assume an uncompromisable attitude to a theory of self which tends to suggest the impossibility of knowing it from the human standpoint. Hence his sustained polemic against Kant's statement of the puzzles of self-consciousness. And as his own views can be best appreciated through his criticism of Kant, we should begin with what he says against the alternative theory rather than his own positive opinions.

Caird's criticism of Kant's idea of self-consciousness is succinctly stated in a well-known passage of his small book on Hegel. Admitting the essential correctness of Kant's contention that the unity of the ego is presupposed in all knowledge, he complains that Kant's account of it is curious, for, "when we look at the matter more closely, it would seem that Kant is here himself guilty of a curious paralogism, in attacking what is our very highest type of knowledge, and rejecting it because it does not conform to his own preconceived ideas"<sup>18</sup> Though Kant's own analysis proves that "every object of knowledge, as such, involves a relation to a subject; in other words, that it is *not* a simple identity, but involves difference, and unity in difference," yet, his

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<sup>17</sup> *Hegel*, p. 140.

<sup>18</sup> *Hegel*, p. 147.

"mind was secretly possessed with the preconception that the one thing *entirely* intelligible is a pure abstract identity which has no division or difference in it." But when we get rid of this preconception it would appear that self-consciousness is no simple unity or identity; "for if so, it must be purely an object or purely a subject, but really it is both in one; all other things are *for it*, but it is *for itself*." Regarded in this light self-consciousness is our highest type of knowledge, or knowable *par excellence*, "inasmuch as in it the object, which is distinguished from the subject, is, at the same time, most perfectly coalescent with it." That is, as knowledge is the relation of an object to a conscious subject, "it is the more complete, the more intimate the relation; and it becomes perfect when the duality becomes transparent, when subject and object are identified, and the duality is seen to be simply the necessary expression of the unity,—in short, when consciousness passes into self-consciousness." "Self-consciousness is the standing enigma for those who would separate identity and difference."<sup>19</sup> When, on the contrary, it is seen that "the self exists as one self only as it opposes itself as object, to itself as subject, and immediately denies and transcends that opposition,"

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid* , p. 149.



when that is it is *even* to be a concrete unity which has in itself a resolved contradiction," there will be no difficulty in understanding that "its own existence is implicitly the solution of all the division and conflict of things."

This, briefly stated, is Caird's theory of self-consciousness which he develops by a criticism of Kant from the standpoint of Hegel, and which, according to him, is the only theory that can successfully overcome the perplexities relating to the possibility of knowing the source of all knowledge. The self, according to this view, is described as a "dual unity," a "restored unity," an "organic unity:" or again as a "pure transparent identity-in-difference." The truth that all these descriptions are meant to bring out is that self-consciousness is a mediated consciousness, it is a consciousness which presupposes the consciousness of the objects, and so cannot be realised except in relation to the latter. Hence, it is further urged, the development of the consciousness of objects and the development of self-consciousness proceed strictly *pari passu*, and every defect in our knowledge of the world corresponds to a consciousness of disunion in ourselves. It will be out of place to explain with any detail here the further considerations by which Caird is led from the organic nature of the development of self-consciousness to the idea of a "perfect intelligence" or a "spiritual principle" of which the

world is the self manifestation<sup>20</sup> or as he puts it in another context, "time and space, the world of objects so related, cannot be adequately understood unless we regard it as essentially related to a conscious self, and as a necessary element in its self-consciousness or, in other words, unless we regard the world in space and time as essentially the manifestation of a spiritual principle,"<sup>21</sup> which, again, "shows its unity with itself just in the process of change."<sup>22</sup>

The question that is all-important for our present purpose is whether the explanation of what may be called mediated self-consciousness does really solve the puzzles of self-consciousness as formulated by those who have admitted them to be inseparable from our necessarily discursive knowledge. That is, granting that mediated self-consciousness is a restored unity, is a return of the self upon itself, do the conditions of this mediated self-consciousness remove the puzzles as they are seen by those who distinguish between this type of self-consciousness and that self which is the ultimate principle of all knowledge and experience. The answer will clearly depend upon the meaning of self. If the self can be shown to be real only in so far as it returns upon itself, then, of

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<sup>20</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I. p. 425.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 654.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 89.

course, there is no room for any serious difficulty in accounting for self-consciousness. The self in this sense may well be called a dual unity, or a unity in duality; and it may perhaps also be said with some amount of truth that it is in the return of the self upon itself that "the ego, strictly speaking, comes into existence," and that "only that being is truly to be called an 'I' which calls *itself* so."<sup>23</sup> But can we identify this self with the ultimate unity presupposed in experience? As an account of the development of self-consciousness from the stage of an "undifferentiated unity" to that of a "dual unity," this idealistic theory may be true. But can it identify the developing self with the subject without committing itself to a view of the self which is pre-Kantian? Evidently, all talks of development and growth are intelligible only in respect of a thing which is in time, and is subject to the categories through which alone any object exists for us. And it follows from this that the self that develops from consciousness to self-consciousness must be under those very conditions of space, time and categories which are the conditions of objectivity. This self, therefore, cannot be the subject in the true sense of the term.

This distinction between the developing self and the subject is, in fact, accentuated by Caird in differ-

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<sup>23</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 403.

ent contexts. Mind he tells us has a twofold aspect because it is "not merely an object in the known and knowable world, he is also a subject of knowledge, and it is only for such a subject that an object or a world of objects can exist. Hence we may speak of man's knowing himself in two ways: of a knowledge of himself in which he is regarded simply as the self, the thinking subject which is implied in all objects of knowledge and of a knowledge of himself as a human being, distinguished from other human beings, from the animals and from nature in general; and standing in definite relations to each of them."<sup>24</sup> The defect of the "psychological theory of knowledge," it is further declared, consists in this that it "treats the faculty of knowledge merely as an attribute of certain things in the world, by which they are characterised and distinguished from other things, so that, *e.g.*, as weight is the attribute of a stone, thought is the attribute of man." Epistemology, on the contrary, looks upon mind as "presupposed in everything known or knowable; or, in other words, in so far as the principles which are involved in the relation of objects to a conscious self are the latent presuppositions of all knowledge, the principles through which everything else must be known, and by means of which, therefore, every other kind of

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

knowledge must be tried. Hence, it is further pointed out, that as "no object of knowledge is given apart from its relation to the subject," we must avoid the "confusion of the distinction of the subject and the object of knowledge with the distinction of mind and matter as different objects of knowledge."<sup>25</sup> Now, this line of thought, if properly developed to its consequences, leads necessarily, as we have frequently urged, to an agnostic theory of self, in so far as the self as subject has none of those conditions of objectivity by means of which all objects, including mind itself, can be known. Caird, however, is anxious to save his theory from the agnostic tendency which was prominent in Green's elaboration of the epistemological doctrine of the self. And the result is that he ends by over-emphasising the other extreme of the logical see-saw. That is, starting with the same premises as Green did, yet trying to evade the agnostic conclusion necessarily following from those premises, Caird comes unwittingly to view the subject of knowledge as an object, and so far fails to maintain the epistemological attitude with which he started.

It will no doubt appear as extremely improbable that Caird who opened his famous exposition of the Kantian theory of knowledge with an emphatic rejection of the psychological theory should have come

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* , p. 20.

to regard the subject as an object. But, we believe, the greatest thinker cannot help falling into confusions when he attempts to know the ultimate principle of knowledge in the same way as he knows an object, or, what is the same thing from the other side, when he seeks to avoid the agnostic conclusion that follows from the epistemological distinction of subject from mind. In illustration of the confusions into which such a thinker must fall in the long run, we have but to refer to a very significant passage in which Caird makes a desperate attempt to reconcile the epistemological distinction of the self as the ultimate presupposition of all knowledge from every known and knowable object, with his belief that the self is knowable *par excellence*. When we apply the idea of development to a self-conscious being, we cannot, it is maintained, "suppose a difference, such as exists between things as in space and time, to exist in that for which alone time and space are. Yet, on the other hand, in so far as we admit that such a consciousness is gradually developed, we are obliged to regard the subject of it as passing through states in time and standing in relation to objects which externally affect it. Our first solution of the difficulty will naturally be to say that the developing being presupposes the externality which yet it negates, and that it presupposes the successive determination of the subject which yet is a conscious subject only as it

cancels succession in itself. But the difficulty returns that, in taking this view, we seem to be making the subject of the consciousness, for which time and space alone are, itself an object in time and space, while yet we regard the process of its existence as one in which both time and space are negated. To put it more directly, a developing consciousness is conceived as passing through a series of stages, yet just so far as its development is *for itself*,—and it cannot be *its* development, strictly speaking, till it is for itself,—it neutralises this change.” How to get rid of this difficulty? Caird’s answer is that “while space and time and all objects in them exist only for a self-conscious subject, and while, in so far as I am a conscious self, they exist for me, yet that I am a derived self-consciousness, and so far must be regarded as an object, and not as a subject; though it is only as a subject that I am in the proper sense an ego or self,—a being which can say “I.”<sup>26</sup>

Thus, in his attempt to steer clear of the two extreme positions,—namely (1) the self is one object among others, and (2) the self is not knowable,—Caird, in direct contradiction to his epistemological premises, comes to yield to that transcendental illusion which is inseparable from the psychological attitude, and which he has himself done so much to

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<sup>26</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I p. 648; also II, p. 399.

explode. While rightly insisting that every known and knowable object presupposes a subject for which the object can exist, and which, therefore, cannot be identified with any object of knowledge except through a confusion, while emphasising the important distinction between the subject of knowledge and mind which is but one of the objects of knowledge standing in definite relations with other objects; while entering an emphatic protest against the widespread illusion to regard the subject as a thing and knowledge as a quality; Caird is compelled to countenance a theory which, when strictly interpreted, cannot be reconciled with his epistemological findings. The conceptions of "a derived self-consciousness" and of a subject which may be "regarded as an object" cannot be seriously justified without violence to the valuable truth that the subject-object relation is ultimate, and, as such, it is presupposed by every other relation. All distinctions are within knowledge, and so A and B as objects on which we can hold intelligible discourses must both fall within knowledge, irrespective of the nature of the relation obtaining between them. A, for instance, may be either the cause or the effect, the antecedent or the consequent, the end or means, the substance or attribute, in relation to B. But all these multifarious relations which are but the different ways of determining A and B must ultimately fall within the



subject-object relation, or, which is the same thing in another language, must fall within knowledge. A subject, therefore, that can be regarded as an object, or a self that is derived from something other than itself, is an entirely inconceivable and self-contradictory notion, whatever may be the ultra-logical grounds on which its claims to a respectful hearing be justified.

On a closer examination, however, it would appear that such inconceivable notions as a derived self-consciousness and an objectified subject are not so much dictated by logical exigencies as by what may be called the gnostic prejudices of Caird. If everything which is real must exist for a subject, it will necessarily fall on the objective side. How then to know the subject to be real? We must either say that the subject is only a *focus imaginarius* though it is at the same time the basis of all knowledge; it is the determining principle involved in all knowledge of objects and hence cannot be itself determined except by giving up the initial position that all objects exist for a subject. The other alternative, which Caird endeavours to defend, is to start with the assumption of the knowability of the subject and then, as nothing can be knowable except by presupposing a subject, to refer to another subject for which the former subject is an object. But, as Bradley has rightly urged, the old difficulty is not

solved by this appeal to the new subject; for, even here "the correlated terms are for a subject which itself is not given. The correlation falls in the experience of this new subject, which itself remains outside that object."<sup>27</sup> And, as a matter of fact, even Caird is sometimes forced by the logic of the situation to admit that "the correlativity of the object and subject is a correlativity for the subject,"<sup>28</sup> and, regarded in this sense, the self "overreaches the distinction between itself and its object."<sup>29</sup> But, then, the all-important question, to put it naively, is --which of the two subjects do you mean to refer to in this context? Does the world of objects stand as a correlative to the new subject for which the object as well as the old subject are mere objects? If not, then, are we to suppose that the correlativity of subject and object exists for the same subject which is one of the co-related terms? It is, we venture to submit, impossible to find an unambiguous reply to these questions from Caird's statements. The self, he will tell us, is a subject, a restored unity, an object, a derived self-consciousness, an infinite intelligence, an unconscious unity underlying the correlativity of subject and object, and what not. And it

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<sup>27</sup> *Truth and Reality*, p. 193.

<sup>28</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 425.

<sup>29</sup> *Hegel*, p. 182.

is this ambiguity which helps to conceal the defects of his attempts to reconcile the theory of a knowable ego with the epistemological interpretation of the subject-object relation.

But while the ambiguity persists, it is useless to clear up the situation by means of metaphorical language. There is no doubt a ring of absurdity in the complaint that "it is impossible to see the sun because we cannot throw the rays of a candle upon it," and then point out that "as it is the light which reveals both itself and the darkness, so it is self-consciousness through which we know both itself and all other things."<sup>30</sup> The force of this remark depends upon the sense in which self-consciousness is used. If it simply means that every object presupposes a subject for which it exists, so that the unity of self which is the ultimate condition of all knowledge of objects cannot be denied, then, no doubt, the remark is not only true, but every attempt to assail it is bound to lead ultimately to self-refutation. Caird, however, does not seem to mean only this. The unity, he further tells us, is a unity in difference, or, more precisely, a pure transparent identity-in-difference. In this sense, it is the "ideal unity," or rather, the "last category" which contains and implies all the other categories. That is, self-consciousness, or rather,

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<sup>30</sup> *Hegel*, p. 147.

the self which is the ultimate presupposition of all knowledge of objects is no simple identity; "for if so it must be purely an object or purely a subject, but really it is both in one; all other things are *for* it, but it is *for itself*." If this be the meaning of the self, then, we maintain emphatically that the metaphor quoted above is not true. There is a whole world of difference between the position that the world exists for a self and that the self is neither a mere subject nor a mere object, but both in one.

We must, however, hasten to add that nothing which we have so far said implies a criticism of the category of unity-in-difference. On the contrary, we believe that it is a valuable correction of the logic of bare identity. A thing apart from its relations with other things is incomprehensible and unintelligible, and it is through the relations alone that the things get those mutual determinations which are indispensable for the existence of everything on which we can make intelligible assertions. But this does not show that the relating or determining principle for which the world of things exists or in relation to which the world has a meaning is itself a unity-in-difference, or that it is itself determined by the world of objects. That would be to put the subject side by side with the object which is evidently tantamount to denying that there is a subject at all. And in fact Caird, as we have already remarked, in his anxiety

to avoid agnosticism has come perilously near conceiving the subject as an object, and has tried to save his own position from this apparent inconsistency by shifting the rôle of the subject from the finite to the infinite principle of union for which the finite principle is only an object. This, however, does not solve the real difficulty, it only pushes the real problem further back. Similarly, a number of other inconsistencies in Caird's views on self-consciousness arise from the same source, and these are made only less palpable by the ambiguous way in which the term subject is used. Thus, on the one hand, the process of reflection is said to discover "the categories and the forms of sense beneath ordinary experience, and the unity of the self beneath the categories and the forms of sense,"<sup>31</sup> on the other hand, the self is also said to be not so much beneath the categories as itself the highest category of knowledge, and in this sense it is supposed to be "the ultimate meaning or truth" of all other categories.<sup>32</sup> Now, if it is admitted that the self is the unity underlying the categories, then it clearly follows that it cannot be itself brought under them, and as nothing can be an object which is incomprehensible through the categories the self, in the

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<sup>31</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, II, p. 641.

<sup>32</sup> *Hegel*, p. 183.

absence of the conditions of objectivity, remains in comprehensible. If, on the other hand, the self be the highest category, then, clearly it is not the ultimate principle of knowledge; for a category is a mode of interpretation through which the world of objects exists, and, as such, it presupposes a principle beyond itself.

This brings us to another deep-lying inconsistency which runs through every attempt to evade the agnostic conclusion following from the epistemological attitude. The correlativity of subject and object has become almost a commonplace of philosophy since Kant undertook a transcendental deduction of the categories. But the value of this doctrine, like the value of every other such commonplace, depends upon a careful interpretation. As nothing can exist which is not realised or realisable within knowledge, and inasmuch as self is the ultimate principle involved in all knowledge, there is an important sense in which the self and the world are in perfect correlativity with each other. Every object in this sense presupposes a subject which is the common centre, as it were, of all the objective zones. When, however, it is added, from the other side, that there can be no subject apart from the object everything depends upon how this is understood. The very first point which has to be borne in mind in this connection is, as we have suggested in relation to Green's position

that the correlativity of subject and object should not be conceived on the analogy of inter-objective correlativity. Two objects, such as father and son, husband and wife, are in correlativity with each other, so that there is a sense in which one cannot exist without its relation to the other. More precisely, as every object receives its determination from the relations in which it stands to other objects, it cannot exist in the absence of the latter. 'A thing, in other words, owes its being to the relations,—spatial, temporal, causal, etc—in which it stands to other things, so that to take away all the relations from a thing is to reduce it to a pure nothing. On the other hand, our knowledge of the things grow more and more in definiteness according as it is brought into relation with an ever wider circle of things. Following this line of thought, we can easily see that for a perfect intelligence the world will present itself as a systematic whole in which all things are organically related with one another, so that any two things in that whole are in perfect correlativity with each other. But it is equally important to remember here that this inter-objective correlativity or relation is not analogous to the relation in which the correlative things stand to the subject which is their common presupposition, and in this sense the subject-object relation is the ultimate relation within which all the inter-objective relations must necessarily fall. All

intelligible reality, as Green has put it, must indifferently consist in a relation between subject and object

What, then, do we mean when in the light of this unique relation we interpret the view that the subject cannot exist apart from the object? In other words, is it possible to distinguish the subject-object relation from all inter-objective relations, and yet hold that the subject cannot exist except as organically related to the object? If it is admitted that the subject is the ultimate presupposition of every object of knowledge, can we reverse the proposition and maintain that the object is a presupposition of the subject? Our answer is that as the subject is not a thing which must be necessarily a determinate something, as it is only the limiting concept to which all objects point, but not a positive concept such as is implied in the notions of an ultra-phenomenal *object* or a noumenal *thing*, the questions formulated here, when taken strictly and seriously, are inadmissible. A noumenon, when it is something more than a limiting concept, has to be grasped only in contrast with the phenomenon, and, as such, it becomes an object of a different order. But however different may be the order to which a particular object may belong, as an object of thought it must submit to the conditions of objectivity and cannot be taken to be identical with the subject for which alone all objects and all distinctions among



objects exist. So when it is said that the subject is beyond the phenomenal world, the truth of the remark is entirely missed if we continue to regard the noumenal subject as a positive something. And from this it follows that no intelligible meaning can be ascribed to such assertions as that the subject cannot exist apart from the object, or that the object is a presupposition of the subject. For such observations have a meaning only on the assumption that the subject is a determinate something though it may belong to a different order from that under which the things other than the subject fall. But, in that case, as Kant has made it clear once for all, "the logical exposition of thought in general is mistaken for a metaphysical determination of the object." And in so far as the post-Kantian idealists have attempted a metaphysical determination of the subject, the value of A. Seth's criticism cannot be overestimated. Kant's argument, he remarks, "is overlaid in parts by extraneous considerations, and infected by Kant's relativistic prejudices but in pointing out the merely logical character of the self reached by the analysis of knowledge, he is not only guided by a sounder instinct, but shows also a keener insight than his speculative followers." Then with reference to the passage quoted above it is observed: "The words are spoken of the metaphysical psychologists, but it would be impossible to characterise more aptly the fallacy which

underlies the neo-Kantian deification of the abstract unity of thought.”<sup>33</sup>

We are not concerned here with A. Seth’s positive views, but the important observations he has made on the Kantian theory of ego, and on the neo-Kantian departure from the spirit of the critical philosophy are, we believe, based on a deep insight into the Kantian analysis of knowledge. The transcendental ego of Kant, he urges, cannot be identified with the spiritual principle of the post-Kantian idealists, and, in fact, “unless we have other data, and approach the question along a different road, we are still far from anything like spirituality or freedom in the ordinary sense of these words.”<sup>34</sup> “In this respect,” it is further remarked, “Kant saw his way more clearly than many of those who make bold to teach him consistency. . . . Kant himself, it is almost superfluous to point out, would have never acquiesced in the deductions which his neo-Kantian followers have drawn from his premises.” These deductions, in the opinion of A. Seth, are due to the mistake of transforming a logical subject into a metaphysical existence. The mistake perhaps may be more aptly described, as he himself suggests, as the transformation of the transcendental subject which logical exposition yields

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<sup>33</sup> *Hegelianism and Personality*; p. 38

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

into a Universal Spiritual Consciousness by interpreting the subject as an object. The transcendental subject, when strictly taken, is a principle of unity, or a unifying principle, and, as such, no more than a *focus imaginarius* or a limiting concept; whereas the spiritual principle is something very definite, it is a unity-in-difference, or rather a unity which manifests itself in the differences, and is the source of our moral and religious aspirations. Thus the limiting concept of a noumenal subject is metaphysically determined as a definite object of thought. This object may not be in space and time, and perhaps it may also be said with some truth that it is not subject to the ordinary categories of causality and substance; yet it is at the same time characterised as spiritual and noumenal in a *positive* sense. But if it be granted that every object must exist for a subject with which the former cannot be identified, then, the noumenal object must equally be distinguished from the subject for which it exists. If, on the contrary, this particular object of thought be identified with the subject, there is absolutely no reason why any other object, such as matter and mind, electricity and magnetism, should fall on the objective side only.

The fact is, as Green has urged, in the passage already quoted, that the subject-object relation is the "generic element" in our description of the knowable universe, and so the thinking ego is the source of the

conceptions in virtue of its presence to objects but under which for that very reason it cannot itself be known." And as that to which no conceptions are applicable cannot be an object of thought, the thinking ego eludes the grasp of our discursive knowledge. Yet, it is the basis of all knowledge and knowable universe, and of all distinctions within the knowable universe, be they the distinction of matter and mind or spirit and matter, or phenomenon and noumenon. It may now be easy to see the real meaning of the correlativity of subject and object. The only sense in which this widely accepted doctrine is true is that every knowable thing presupposes a knower, or, more precisely, a unifying principle. But the presupposed principle is not a thing, nor an object of thought, for to make the subject an object of thought would require, as it is commonly said, another subject. Hence, all further talks of the subject, such as it is conditioned by the object, or it is determined by its relation to the object, or it expresses itself in the world of objects—are unmeaning and unintelligible, as they are inconsistent with the recognition of the ultimate character of the subject-object relation.

It is perhaps necessary to add here that the spiritual principle which Caird in agreement with the absolutists in general has inferred from the correlativity of the subject-object would never have been actually inferred if he had more carefully distinguish-

ed this correlativity from what we have called the inter-objective correlativity. But not having always clearly distinguished between these two types of relativity, and having taken the principle of identity-in-difference as the highest principle of thought, he steps beyond the subject-object relation to a "higher unity," or an "unconscious unity" which is supposed to lie "beneath the conscious duality of self and not-self," or "beyond the opposition of the subjective unity of thought and the objective unity of knowledge." That, here, Caird, contrary to his own teachings, has been led to confuse the subject-object relation with an inter-objective relation, and has unconsciously substituted a thing or object for subject, may be easily seen from his explanation of the idea of spirit "Thought," it is said, "is always distinction, determination, the marking off of one thing from another," but though in his sense it is true that "a thing which has nothing to distinguish it is unthinkable, but equally unthinkable is a thing which is so separated from all other things as to have no community with them."<sup>35</sup> "If, therefore, we say that everything—every intelligible object of thought as such—must be differentiated from all others, yet we must equally say that no object of thought can be absolutely differentiated; in other words, differen-

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<sup>35</sup> *Hegel*, p. 135.

tiated so as to exclude any identity or unity which transcends the difference." In this sense, "there is a unity which lies beneath all opposition." It is clear from such expressions that Caird is here thinking of things as intelligible objects of thought. And consequently the relations and the distinctions he is talking of in this context are inter-objective relations. But the difficulty is that he does not restrict these observations to the objects only, and goes on to remark that "neither things nor thoughts can be treated as simply self-identical—as independent or atomic existences, which are related only to themselves. They are essentially parts of a whole, or stages in a process, and as such they carry us beyond themselves, the moment we clearly understand them."<sup>36</sup>

Now, when we speak of thoughts and things as parts of a whole, these parts, as well as the whole must be, according to his own showing, "at least intelligible, since they exist for our intelligence." And it follows from this that the *intelligence* for which the thoughts and the things exist cannot be identified with the *thoughts* which are grasped in distinction from the things. Nor can the whole of which thoughts and things are parts be identified with that intelligence for which it exists as an intelligible

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

entity. Caird, however, to the great bewilderment of his readers, speaks of the principle of unity-in-difference indifferently in respect of the subject-object relation as well as inter-objective relations. Not only this, but he actually characterises the spiritual unity as one in which "the idea of antagonism is overcome, contradiction reconciled,"<sup>37</sup> and it is further said to be a unity "which can be realised only through such a conflict." But, then, the question must press itself: is not this spiritual unity itself "at least intelligible," and, as such, existing only "for our intelligence"? To answer the question in the affirmative is to admit that it is an object, and must presuppose, like every other intelligible reality, the subject. A negative answer, on the other hand, would lead ultimately to agnosticism which Caird rejects from the beginning.

All these difficulties, we submit, are due to the attempt to apply to the subject the principles which underlie our knowledge of the world of objects. Substance, causality, reciprocity quite as much as unity and difference, are categories to which the objects of thought must conform, but, for that very reason, the subject cannot itself be known under them. Caird admits this, but partially. "It was Kant's merit," he says, "that his criticism rested

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

from the first upon the principle, that it is impossible to apply to the subject the categories by which objects are determined as such; . . . and in the second edition of the *Critique*, he made steps toward a view of inner experience, as not merely the consciousness of the self as an object among other objects, but as an outer experience freed from its abstraction, *i.e.*, regarded as the experience of a self."<sup>38</sup> Having admitted this, however, Caird does not draw the conclusion which we have suggested, namely, that no category should be applied to the subject. The chief defect of psychology, according to him, is to regard man in whom nature comes to itself, or comes to self-consciousness as a phenomenon connected with other phenomena according to the category of causality and reciprocity. But "it is impossible, in truth, to take a conscious self as one of the objects of experience, objects which are conceived as externally determining and determined by each other, without leaving out all its distinctive characters as a conscious being. Even an animal cannot be fully or adequately determined from such a point of view, much less an intelligence. We need higher categories to do justice to life and mind; and if experience means the determination of objects by the principle of external necessity, we cannot have experience of such objects."<sup>39</sup> Thus, according

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<sup>38</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, II, p. 100.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.



to Caird, it is impossible to apply to the subject, not any category, but only the categories of external necessity; here we need higher categories. But does this conclusion really follow from Caird's premises? Without challenging the Hegelian gradation of categories, one can perhaps still maintain that the subject for which all objects exist and have their meaning is as little to be identified with life and mind as with matter and energy. Mind may require higher categories for its adequate determination, but the mind which is thus determined, as Caird himself has urged in another context, is not the subject. And a category, howsoever high may be its place in relation to other categories, is only a mode of determining an object of thought, and as such inapplicable to the subject for which all intelligible reality exists. And, in fact, when it is unreservedly admitted that Kant was right in recognising that "the relation of objects to the self cannot be brought under the same categories as those which determine the relation of objects to each other *for* the self,"<sup>40</sup> it is difficult to see how the case becomes different if, in place of matter and energy, the objects are life and mind.

The fact seems to be that Caird does not invariably and consistently stick to the truth that the subject-object relation is ultimate, though the whole

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 603.

burden of his own analysis of knowledge rests upon its recognition. All that is thinkable or knowable, he rightly insists, presupposes the thinking ego. So the world of intelligible reality must presuppose the ego for which it exists, or, in other words, the world is an existence-for-self. But if this be recognised, then the self for which the world has a meaning cannot itself be regarded as forming an element within the world. Yet, the transition from one position to the other is made frequently, as if both the positions were identically the same. Indeed, this transition is almost characteristic of Caird as well as of those who are of his way of thinking. But on closer examination, it may be seen that from the doctrine that every object must exist for a subject it does not follow that the subject itself must be an object; or, what is the same thing in different words, from the truth that the world of objects has no meaning apart from its relation to the subject, it does not follow that the subject must somewhere be in the world. This would be to make the presupposition of the world itself a part of the world. And the position remains essentially unaltered, if we were to substitute for the world in space and time the term universe which includes a number of other worlds than the spatio-temporal world. Because, in that case, even the universe must be supposed to exist for the self, on pain of being

reduced to nothing. The self as the subject, as Caird himself tells us, is "presupposed in everything known and knowable," and in so far as the universe is at least knowable, the subject is the presupposition of the universe. However "anomalous" be the position of the subject in such a theory, it is the legitimate conclusion of an unbiassed logical procedure.

It is, however, interesting to note that Caird himself appears sometimes to come very near the position we are trying to maintain. Thus, for instance, in expounding Green's theory, he tells us approvingly that "if we cannot regard natures as complete in itself apart from a principle of intelligence substantially identical with that which we know in ourselves, then we may fairly argue that man, in so far as such a principle of intelligence manifests itself in him, is not to be reduced to a merely natural existence, a mere part of the natural system. If he were merely a part of it, he could not know it. Or, at least, if we do regard him as a part of nature, we must be using the word 'nature' to express the whole system of related phenomena, *including* the spiritual principle which it implies. And then we must find some other word to express the system of relations *exclusive* of that principle."<sup>41</sup> The legitimate conclusion from such lines of thought is that man, in so far as he

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<sup>41</sup> *Mind*, Vol. VIII, 1883, p. 547.

knows the universe cannot be a part of the universe or, conversely, if he were a part of the universe, he could not know the universe. But the universe *ex hypothesi* includes everything that can be thought of as existing or as real, hence the principle which the universe implies is not to be brought under the categories which are after all the modes of thought through which the universe exists. Caird, however, seeks to avoid this legitimate conclusion, as we have frequently noted, on account of his gnostic prejudices, or aversion to agnosticism. And the result is that though he emphasises that "we must be careful to observe that a being in whom the spiritual principle, which is the principle of unity in the world, manifests itself, must not be brought under categories," yet, he hastens to qualify his remark by an unwarrantable restriction to the categories of substance and cause only. This restriction, we have contended, is inconsistent with his own premises, and we need not repeat our contentions. But we can now see the reasons why Caird sounded a note of protest when Green, with an unprejudiced openness of mind, came to countenance a type of modified agnosticism in so far as the ultimate principle of knowledge was concerned. Green, it is complained by Caird, "while, like Kant, he bids us reason backwards from our intellectual and moral experience to that spiritual

nature in which lies the possibility at once of knowledge and of moral action, is also like Kant in refusing to say much of that spiritual nature in itself." Green, it is admitted, was right in holding that "the source of the categories cannot be brought under the categories," and this he has shown "with great force of argument." But the difficulty is that "he is unwilling to go much further—either in the direction of speculation about the nature of the self-conscious principle to which he has referred all things, or in positively working out any view of nature and human history as the manifestation of spirit."<sup>42</sup>

But, as we have tried to show above, it is not possible to go further than Green has really gone, except on other than logical lines, and in this regard Kant's attitude, we venture to suggest, was more logical than that of his illustrious exponent. And Green's insight here is distinctly deeper than that of Caird. If the subject-object relation is admitted to be unique, then, it is certainly more proper to insist, with Green, that the unifying consciousness "should not itself be one of the objects so related," or that the subject is a principle of union which is not "one or any number of the relations" that constitute nature, rather than hold, with Caird, that the self is "a circle of relations in itself,"<sup>43</sup> and, then

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 560.

<sup>43</sup> *Hegel*, p. 149.

finding it "absurd to say that the synthesis by which it becomes conscious of itself as an object, at the same time hides it from itself."<sup>44</sup>

The difficulties of the psychological as well as the epistemological accounts of self-consciousness which have engaged us so far point to the crying need for a satisfactory theory of self. The puzzles, it may have appeared clear from the foregoing considerations, are ultimately traceable to the ambiguous use of terms 'consciousness' and 'knowledge.' Self-consciousness, self-knowledge, self-feeling, are some of the terms that hide a lot of sins and have spelt disaster to philosophical discussions on the problem of self. The prospects of a satisfactory solution of this supreme problem are, therefore, likely to be brighter if we start with the notion of consciousness rather than that of self. The doctrine which denies the very reality and existence of consciousness being the necessary result of a particular approach to the problem of self, it will be useful to begin with a short examination of this ultra-sceptical attitude of contemporary thought.

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<sup>44</sup> *Critical Philosophy*, I, p. 411.

## THE RELATIONAL THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The development of philosophical thought is, not in a small measure, due to the rise of the sceptical spirit which paves the way to sound speculations by exposing the self-contradictory basis of dogmatism. Scepticism, therefore, is invariably a sign of the maturity and vitality of reason. There is, however, an unhealthy type of scepticism which, far from providing a stepping-stone to further progress and maturer growth, has always acted as a clog in the way of rational speculations; it doubts everything without looking at its own foundations, it carries on its destructive campaign against every established belief and institution without stopping to examine the ground upon which it itself stands. Any one who surveys reflectively the main currents of contemporary thought would have no difficulty in detecting that the majority of the currents have an unmistakable tendency towards a position that can hardly be distinguished from this unhealthy scepticism. The result is that a lot of mist has gathered around some of the most fundamental principles of thought and existence. The object of the following lines is to

attempt a partial dissipation of the mist with the aid of an Indian analysis of one of these basic principles, namely, the principle of consciousness.

In a well-known passage of his *Commentary on the Prāśnopanīṣad*, Śaṅkara attempts a classification of the principal theories of consciousness each of which had its enthusiastic exponents in the history of Indian speculation. The advaita theory of consciousness is here distinguished from as many as four other theories which are carefully scrutinized and ultimately rejected as based upon an imperfect analysis of experience. These rival theories are defined as follows:—(1) that which looks upon consciousness as something that is very moment born and destroyed, (2) the theory which denies the very reality of consciousness, (3) that which regards consciousness to be an evanescent property of a permanent self, and (4) the theory according to which consciousness is the quality of matter.<sup>1</sup> It is easy to see that almost every theory of consciousness that is still in the forefront of philosophical discussion today can be classified under one or the other of the different heads mentioned here. And an examination of some of the outstanding theories of contemporary philosophy in the light of the advaita analysis may, therefore, be of fascinating interest for the modern thinkers.

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Prāśnopanīṣad*, VI, 2.



The polemical mood in which Śaṅkara expounds the advaita theory of consciousness frequently obscures the important hints he gives of a constructive theory, and it will, therefore, be useful to start with an initial statement of the main features of his position. The most important and far-reaching of his contentions is to be found in what may be called the foundational character of knowledge or consciousness. It ought to be accepted as a universal rule, he insists, that there can be no object of knowledge without knowledge.<sup>2</sup> None can prove something that is not known, and the attempt to prove it would be as absurd as to maintain that there is no eye though the form is apprehended.<sup>3</sup> The objects may change their essence, but consciousness cannot be said to change inasmuch as it witnesses all objects irrespective of the place where they may happen to be; the fact-of-being-known is thus implied by all objects without exception.<sup>4</sup> Even when something is supposed to be non-existent, this very non-existence cannot be proved in the absence of knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Na hi jñāne asati jñeyam nāma bhavati kasyacit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Kincit na jñāyate iti anupapannam, rūpam ca dṛśyate na ca asti cakṣuriti yathā.*

<sup>4</sup> *Svarūpavyabhicāreṣu padārtheṣu caitanyasyāvyabhicārāt yathā yathā yo yah padārtho vijñāyate tathā tathā jñāyamānotvādeva tasya tasya caitanyasyāvyabhicāritvam vas'utatvam bhavati.*

<sup>5</sup> *Abhāvasyāpi jñeyatvāt jñānābhāve tadānupapattih.*

The second feature of the advaita analysis of consciousness lies in its insistence that consciousness is always distinct from the object of consciousness. The things, therefore, should on no account be identified with the consciousness which makes them its objects. From this follow two corollaries; namely, that consciousness cannot be its own object and that every object of consciousness is unconscious or material.

Out of these four cardinal points of the advaita theory of consciousness, the first would easily put a modern student in mind of the central contention of an influential school of thought which is generally known as the idealistic school. Since Kant's analysis of knowledge it has been a recognised tenet of the idealistic theory of knowledge that consciousness is the *prius* of reality, inasmuch as all things must be "determined in relation to the conscious self, as the one condition which we can lay down for them *a priori*."<sup>6</sup> In fact, the development of post-Kantian idealism bears eloquent testimony to the vitality of the advaita position, and the former may in this respect be regarded as an elaborate exposition and ramification of the latter.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> E. Caird, *The Critical Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 353.

<sup>7</sup> Compare, for instance, Green's remark that "all knowing and all that is known, all intelligence and intelligible reality, indifferently consists in a relation between subject and

Consciousness, when regarded in this light, is the ultimate principle of revelation for which alone the world of objects has a meaning; it is not a relation between two elements, on the contrary, it is the light which manifests all objects and all relations between the objects. It is "the centre of the whole world comprising the objects, the senses and the mind, and it has neither inside nor outside, it is altogether a mass of knowledge."<sup>8</sup>

This is generally known as the centre theory of self; conscious self, according to it, occupies the central place of the universe, inasmuch as all objects owe their meaning and significance to the relations in which they stand to the self that essentially is consciousness. It is from this standpoint that the self is also described as the *Sākṣī* which witnesses all objects and all changes in the objects, it is *sarva-partyayadarśī* and *citśaktisvarūpamūtra*." The entire world is revealed only through the light of the self. "just as the light of the sun is the condition of the manifestation of all form and colour."<sup>10</sup> This is

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object," and, consequently, the generic element in our definition of the knowable universe is "that it is such a relation." — *Works* II, 386. See also Lord Haldane, *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> *S. B. I.* 4. 19. Compare Lord Haldane's explanation of the sense in which the essence of the panorama of life centres in me as given in the *Reign of Relativity*, p. 169.

<sup>9</sup> *Commentary on the Kenopaniṣad*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> *S. B. I.* 3. 22.

excellently expressed by Suresvara when he remarks that the self and the not-self are established in the world through perception and other means of knowledge, but the not-self is in every case established only on the presupposition of the existence of the self.<sup>11</sup> For a surprisingly similar language one may turn to Prof. B. Varisco's observations that objective existence "is *my* cognition, cognition of an experience belonging to myself, and obtained by an activity of my own; it would not exist, if I did not exist."<sup>12</sup> Hence all objects are said by Sureśvara to be *ātma-pūrvaka*. To put it in the language of modern idealism, existence-for-self is the highest category to which must conform all objects. Matter, mind, electron, proton, etc., have any meaning for us only in so far as they stand in relation to the conscious self whose reality, therefore, has to be presupposed by every intelligible entity. In this sense, consciousness is the prior principle or the foundational fact which cannot be reduced to something other than itself except through a confusion of thought.

A word of explanation may be useful at this place in regard to the precise meaning in which consciousness is said to be the *prius* of reality. This doctrine is often interpreted on the idealistic line and

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<sup>11</sup> *Naishkarmyasiddhi*, IV, 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Know Thyself*, p. 2.

supposed to deny the independent existence of the material world apart from consciousness. This, however, would be to raise a highly controversial and difficult problem, and if the priority of consciousness could not be established till the age-long controversy on the relation between the external world and the knowing mind had been settled once for all in favour of idealism, the advaita theory of consciousness would naturally stand on a shaky foundation. It is, therefore, important to dissociate the assertion of the priority of consciousness from the idealistic contention, and realise clearly that the doctrine of the priority of consciousness is equally compatible with the realistic belief in an independent world. Even if it be granted that knowledge does not create but only reveals a pre-existent reality, yet it would remain unchallengeable that the external reality could not be revealed to us apart from consciousness which is the principle of revelation. We may thus be in a position to appreciate Green's well-known remarks that even if it could be admitted that matter and motion had an existence in themselves, it would still not be by such matter and motion, but by the matter and motion which is known that the function of the soul can be explained by the materialists.<sup>13</sup> The epis-

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<sup>13</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 13. Prof. R. B. Perry does not appear to us to have done full justice to the doctrine of the priority of consciousness when he associates it with idealism

temological priority of the conscious self is thus reconcilable with realism as well as with idealism <sup>14</sup>

The force and vitality of the advaita position will be better appreciated through a consideration of the anti-advaita theories which, as noted above, are classified by Śaṅkara under four heads. The most audacious and apparently paradoxical of all these theories is that of the nihilists who reduce consciousness itself to pure nothing. Not content with the mentalism taught by the Buddhists of the Yogācāra school which reduced everything to momentary flashes of consciousness, the Mādhyamikās seek to cut the ground from under the feet of consciousness itself. This is evidently a very bold and dare-devil position which would easily outbrazen a number of modern theories that deny the reality of consciousness. When W. James challenges the existence of consciousness and proves it to be nothing more than a loose name for the relations existing between certain events and

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in his admirable book, *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 105.—To limit things to what can be experienced may be groundless and misleading (*Ibid.*, p. 316), the things may not require any home, yet the independent reality, call it a thing or a neutral entity, could not be revealed to us and so could not be used in explanation of anything if it had not been known at all.

<sup>14</sup> For a further exposition of the meaning of independence, I must refer the readers to my *Self, Thought and Reality*, pp. 115-120.

the life of the organism <sup>15</sup> he had at least to seek the support of the neutral events for destroying the wide-spread prejudice for consciousness. Consciousness, for him, is a particular relation into which the neutral events enter which, therefore, must be acknowledged to be real entities. The Mādhyamikās, on the other hand, go about their iconoclastic business all single-handed and unaided and will not rest till all philosophical superstitions are finally eradicated including the Vijñānavādi's superstition in favour of consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

Śaṅkara's attitude towards the theory of pure

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<sup>15</sup> *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Method*, I, 1904, since incorporated in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> This distinction between the position of the subjective idealist and that of the nihilist is beautifully brought out in the *Saṃva-Siddhānta-Saṅgraha*, IV, 6, a work attributed to Śaṅkara. The only philosopher whose nihilistic perfection approaches the radical scepticism of the Indian Buddhists is F. H. Bradley who has so far been rightly characterised as "a genuine Mādhvamika" by Dr. Th. Stecherbatsky in his *Nirvāṇa*, p. 52. But the difference between these positions is at least as great as their similarity. Bradley, in spite of his condemnation of the self and self-consciousness as mere appearances, is anxious to find a home for them in the life of the Absolute, though they have to undergo transformation and transmutation before they can enter it. Moreover, the self, for him, though not a true form of experience, is the highest form of experience which we have (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 103). For Nāgārjuna, on the other hand, the self is as unreal as the son of a barren woman, and, consequently, has no place in Reality.

nothing or *Sunyarāda* is generally one of sheer contempt.<sup>17</sup> Yet, however, he has indirectly subjected it to a scathing criticism which, though directed against some of the assumptions of Indian nihilism, may very well be utilized in assessing the merit of the modern theories. One of his contentions against the position of universal nihilism is that a significant denial has invariably a reference to something real as its logical basis, *e g.*, when the illusory snake is negated as unreal this is made possible only on the basis of the perceived rope which is real.<sup>18</sup> Denial is significant only when something is left; if, on the other hand, "everything is denied, and no real entity is left, the negation becomes impossible and, consequently, that entity which we started to deny becomes real." Turning to the nihilist's denial of consciousness, it is remarked in another context that even if the position of the subjective idealist be left in the region of controversy and it is left undecided whether the object of knowledge is real or unreal, yet the reality of consciousness or knowledge has to be presupposed in either case.<sup>19</sup> Even the nihilists, it is observ-

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<sup>17</sup> Compare, for instance, his indignant remark that nihilism does not merit refutation as it is opposed to all types of proof—*S. B.*, II. 2. 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Kinchiḍha paramārtham ālambya aparamārthah pratisīdhyate*—*S. B.* III, 2, 22.

<sup>19</sup> *Ubhayathāpi ghatādivijñānasya bhāvabhūtatvam abhyupagatameva*—*Commentary on the Bṛh. Up.*, IV. 3. 7



ed elsewhere have to concede that non-existence or *abhāva* is knowable as well as permanent.<sup>20</sup> And it would be absurd, therefore, to assert the knowability of negation while denying the reality of knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

The modern theories of consciousness, as we have observed above, are less audacious and much less radical than the doctrine of the Indian nihilists. Even W. James who doubted the reality of consciousness did not doubt the reality of the neutral events which, according to him, were the ultimate stuff of the real world. Similarly, the behaviouristic and neo-realistic doctrines of consciousness, far from committing themselves to the position of universal negation, undertake to reduce consciousness to a particular type of relation between the external stimulus and the organism. That is, instead of reducing consciousness to pure nothing, these modern theories reduce it to something other than consciousness, and so far they escape partly the edge of Śaṅkara's criticism. But this partial escape brings out all the more prominently their weakness when judged in the light of the other part of the criticism. The most fundamental point in

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<sup>20</sup> *Commentary on the Prāśnopanīṣad*, VI, 2.

<sup>21</sup> This argument has found in Prof. Gentile one of its distinguished modern supporters: "It is clear that our very ignorance is not a fact unless at the same time it is a cognition. . . so that ignorance is a fact to which experience can appeal only because it is known."—*The Mind as Pure Act*, p. 29.

the contemporary attempts at denying the reality of consciousness lies in their unanimous rejection of the idealistic procedure of assigning a supreme place to consciousness and knowledge. Things, it is urged, are not only independent of knowledge, but knowledge is nothing more than a specific type of relation into which the things enter under certain conditions. These things are no doubt variously named in the various theories, but the central contention remains identical in all of them, namely, that there is no consciousness outside or apart from the things and their relations.<sup>22</sup>

The internal paradox of the contemporary theories of consciousness may best be exposed by enquiring whether the elements, the neutral events or the bits of pure experience into which consciousness is reduced are themselves unknown or known. The former alternative would evidently render them undistinguishable from pure nothing or mere naught, and, as such, they must repel all predicates. And in that case they cannot be brought in for explaining anything. The only alternative, therefore, would be to admit that they are objects of knowledge and, as

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<sup>22</sup> The only exception to this general tendency is furnished by Prof. S. Alexander who does not favour the total obliteration of the well-established distinction between the mental and the physical and insists on enjoyment and contemplation as being two fundamentally different types of knowledge none of which can be reduced to the other.

such, presuppose the reality of knowledge or consciousness. The scepticism of Descartes, as is well known, was arrested by the *cogito*, and it is this very fact which is denied here. When I doubt, I cannot doubt that I doubt, and as doubting is a mode of consciousness, it would be paradoxical to doubt, and more so to deny, the reality of consciousness. It is this fact which, as we have seen above, is emphasised by the epistemological priority of consciousness.<sup>23</sup> All objects, no matter what they are in detail, are, in so far as they are appealed to in explanation of something, known objects, and must have their *prius* in "I think," "I know" or "I am conscious." They are, as put by Suresvara with his characteristic terseness, *ātmapūrvaka*.

The reason, however, why such an apparently self-evident position threatens to degenerate into the relic of an exploded doctrine is that the majority of the modern theories of consciousness have unwittingly pledged themselves to an altogether unwarranted postulate. This postulate, to put it simply, is that consciousness is an object, and as such can be inves-

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<sup>23</sup> In this connection one may recall Professor G. F. Stout's important observation that whatever "is meant, intended, or thought of by the mind, inasmuch as it is meant, intended, or thought of, is the mind's object, whether it be fact or fiction, a mountain or a headache or a geometrical problem" *Manual of Psychology*, fourth edition, p. 8, And they are all objects because they are "Presented to consciousness."—*Ibid.*, p. 99.

tigated and explained in the same way in which we explain all other objects of the world. There have been, no doubt, philosophers and psychologists who have protested against the practice of regarding the self as an object, but they have as a rule ended by depriving the self of all its meaning till it dwindles into a bare zero or, as it is disparagingly put by A. S. Pringle-Pattison, the dot upon the i.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Kant and Green, J. Ward and E. Caird have exhibited in their exposition of the self a clear drift to agnosticism. Whether or no some type of agnosticism be inseparable from a true theory of self, the indubitable reality of consciousness provides a brilliant instance of a reality which, though incapable of being known as an object, is yet a foundational fact. This leads us to what we have called before the second feature of the advaita theory of consciousness.

Consciousness, according to the advaita thinkers, being the ultimate principle of revelation, cannot stand in need of a more ulterior principle for its own revelation. That which is the *prius* of the knowable objects cannot itself be conceived as an object among other objects much as the light which reveals everything does not require a second light for its own manifestation.<sup>25</sup> Hence, consciousness is characterised

<sup>24</sup> *The Idea of God*, p. 199.

<sup>25</sup> *Samvedanasvarūpatvāt samvedanāntarāpekṣā ca nā sambhavati yathā prakāśasya prakāśāntarāpekṣāyā nā sambhavaḥ tadvat—Commentary on the Kenopaniṣad*, 12.

as *svayamprakāśa*. All things, it is observed,<sup>26</sup> "can be classified as knowledge and knowable, and none except the Vaināśikas would admit a third knowledge which perceives the other knowledge." In fact the distinction between knowledge and the object of knowledge is inevitable in all cases, and "a hundred Vaināśikas cannot make knowledge itself knowable and this is as sure as they cannot revive a dead man." The knowledge of knowledge (*jñānasya jñeyatvam*) or awareness of awareness is, therefore, a psychological absurdity; and even when it is advanced as a logical theory, its untenability may be shown by the evident conflict it comes into with the admittedly valid principle that all objects are presented to consciousness. "In so far as consciousness is an object of consciousness," it has been rightly remarked by Prof. Gentile, "it is no longer consciousness. In so far as the original apperception is an apperceived object, it is no longer apperception."<sup>27</sup>

A lot of mist that has gathered round the problem of self and that of consciousness would, therefore, disappear as soon as we abandon the logical superstition that all that is real must necessarily be a definite object of thought. And modern philosophy has already prepared the weapons with

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<sup>26</sup> *Commentary on the Praśnopaniṣad*, VI, 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

which one may kill the superstition. Berkeley's distinction between 'idea' and 'notion,' Professor S. Alexander's insistence that knowledge in the way of contemplation is altogether different from what we get in the way of enjoyment, James Ward's contrast of the self from the presentations, and lastly G. Gentile's position that the transcendental ego can never in any possible manner be objectified—these are some of the clear instances in which attempts have been made to widen the domain of reality beyond the world of knowable objects. All that is needed now for a just appreciation of the advaita position is to see clearly that it is consciousness and consciousness alone which, though not an object, is yet eminently real. And this would certainly disarm the critics who have been but too ready to identify such a position with that of the agnostic.

It ought to be clear from what has been so far said in elucidation of the advaita doctrine of consciousness that any analysis of consciousness which is undertaken without a distinct comprehension of the essential difference between consciousness on the one hand and the objects that are presented to it on the other is sure to be inadequate and uninformative. That which reveals every object and illumines the entire world of things cannot itself be apprehended as a 'this' or a 'that.' The nearest analogy to it in the physical world is furnished by light which, there-

fore, has been very frequently appealed to in illustrating the peculiar character of consciousness by the Indian as well as the Western thinkers <sup>28</sup> The light which manifests all material things cannot be appropriately said to be here and not there, it is not a particular thing existing by the side of other things, yet it is the condition of the revelation of the particular things.<sup>29</sup> Hence arise the difficulties which our psychologists experience in defining consciousness, the reality of which they find it necessary to emphasise; it is something, they say, that can be defined only in terms of itself. Hence, again, Yājñavalkya while expounding the nature of the Absolute to Uṣasta insisted on the impossibility of explaining it in the same way in which one shows the cow by holding her by the horn. The Self being the seer of sight, as he puts it, it is not capable of being apprehended as an object, as, *e.g.*, we know the jug, etc.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Among the western philosophers, one may remember here Hamilton's comparison of consciousness with "an internal light" (*Metaphysics* I, p. 183) or E. Caird's comparison of the self with "the light which reveals both itself and the darkness" (*Hegel*, p. 147). The advaita literature abounds in this analogy and frequently refers to the self as the lamp-light or the light of the sun.

<sup>29</sup> Another favourite instance of the advaita thinkers is provided by space or *ākāśa* which is too ubiquitous to be determined as 'this' or 'that' or 'here' as distinct from 'there'.

<sup>30</sup> *Commentary on the Brh. Up.*, III. 4. 1.

The initial assumption of the contemporary theories of consciousness is essentially identical with that of Uṣasta, namely, nothing that cannot be presented as a definite object is real. This very assumption was at the root of the imperfect analysis of experience offered by associationism and presentationism; particularly, it formed the corner-stone of Hume's analysis. And if Hume's search for the self ended in a total failure, the relational theories of consciousness of the present century cannot be expected to fare better while the initial assumption is allowed to stand unchallenged. When, that is, consciousness is defined as a species of function exercised by the organism,<sup>31</sup> or as the cross-section of the universe determined by the specific response of the organism,<sup>32</sup> it is not so much as questioned whether consciousness to which are presented all things including the nervous system can itself be adequately conceived as a presentation or a particular type of thing among other things. The result is that the conscious self which in fact is the presupposition of the organism and its function is lost sight of amidst the congeries of objects; and then ingenious attempts are made to evolve it out of that very organism which

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<sup>31</sup> Prof. R. B. Perry, *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, p. 322.

<sup>32</sup> Prof. E. B. Holt, *Concept of Consciousness*, p. 170



when separated from a conscious self is devoid of all intelligible meaning. This procedure, in the words of Śaṅkara, is as preposterous as to think that the colour is seen though there is no eye.<sup>33</sup> When the self is reduced to the complex of the body, etc., it is significantly remarked by Śaṅkara, what is ignored is that "this complex, not being distinguishable from sounds and the rest in so far as it, like them, is of the nature of the knowable, it is not reasonable to attribute the nature of the knower to it."<sup>34</sup> The colour cannot see the sound, but everything is knowable by the self.<sup>35</sup>

A curious meeting of extremes in this respect is illustrated by the accounts of self advanced by Bradley and Bosanquet. Out of the various meanings of self which Bradley examines in his monumental work, *Appearance and Reality*, there is hardly any

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<sup>33</sup> It is interesting to note that W. James whose analysis has profoundly influenced the realistic theories of our age has sometimes been more careful in this respect than his followers. When the psychologist undertakes an analysis of knowledge, he tells us, he has not only to see the elements and their relations involved in knowledge, but also the relation in which he himself stands to the total situation.—*Principles of Psychology*, I, p. 184. When a philosopher analyses or explains an object, it is as natural as it is disastrous to drop himself out of sight.

<sup>34</sup> *Dehādisaṅghātasyāpi śabdādisvarūpatvāviśeṣāt vijñeyatvāviśeṣāt ca na yuktam vijñātṛtvam.*

<sup>35</sup> *Sarvameva tu ātmanā vijñeyam*—*Commentary on the Kathopaniṣad*, IV, 3.

reference to the doctrine according to which the self is Consciousness or Knowledge, though such a doctrine has been strongly suggested by the idealists and sometimes ably explained as, *e.g.*, by Lord Haldane.<sup>36</sup> And the reason seems to be that he starts with the same assumption which vitiated the analysis of Hume and the associationists in general.<sup>37</sup> Even if it be granted that the self is, "where not hiding itself in obscurity, a mere bundle of discrepancies,"<sup>38</sup> it may still be urged that the conscious self *for* which such a bundle exists cannot itself be reduced to a mere bundle of discrepancies. The fact is that all his difficulties about the self, as aptly put by Dr. Haldar, are "due to his identification of it with its content."<sup>39</sup> And once this identification is assumed to be true, it would be a comparatively easy task to condemn the self as a gross fiction, a mere monster, or a metaphysical chimera. This identification remains essentially unchallenged in Bosanquet's

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<sup>36</sup> Compare, for instance, his article in the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. IX, and also *The Reign of Relativity*, pp. 160, 288.

<sup>37</sup> This is particularly evident from the way in which he asks "whether there is anything which may not become an object, and in that sense, a not-self"—*loc. cit.*, p. 77. Such remarks as that the main bulk of the elements on the side of the self and on the side of the non-self "is interchangeable" illustrate clearly Bradley's tendency to presentationism.

<sup>38</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>39</sup> *Neo-Hegelianism*, p. 252.

theory. It is true that he, in spite of his deep sympathy with Bradley's way of thinking, does not go the length of condemning the self as a mere appearance. On the contrary, he insists that the significance of mind should be accepted on its own merits and as *sui generis*. Yet, the description of the self as a world of experience working itself out towards harmony and completeness, or an active form of totality, or, again, as a living world of content, is strongly suggestive of a fruitless search of the conscious self in the wrong place <sup>40</sup>

The conclusion that emerges out of these considerations is that no theory of consciousness is likely to survive the light of critical thought which leaves unexamined and unchallenged the identification of consciousness with what is presented to it. And it further follows that consciousness cannot be dismissed as a mere chimera simply on the ground that it cannot be known as an object. Thus, agnosticism and presentationism are the two extremes which should be carefully avoided by a true theory of consciousness. The self, which is essentially consciousness for the advaita thinkers, is, therefore, frequently described as different from the known and beyond the unknown, and this character, it is urged,

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<sup>40</sup> Some of his pregnant remarks on the self are to be found in *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, pp. 193, 289, 335. Cf. also *The Nature of Mind*, p. 125f.

does not belong to any other thing.<sup>41</sup> That is, as explained by Śaṅkara, the self is different from the entire world of objects but that does not mean that it is unknown.<sup>42</sup>

The advaita distinction between the *svayamsiddha* and the *āgantuka* is intended to convey essentially the same meaning. The conscious self, according to the thinkers of this school, is of the nature of an irrepressible reality which is necessarily presupposed by all proof and disproof, and which, therefore, falls beyond the region of logical justification or refutation. The self in this respect is different from the adventitious objects, such as ether. These are not beyond the range of proof (*pramāṇa-nirapekṣa*) or self-established (*svayamsiddha*); the self, on the other hand, is the basis (*āśraya*) of the process of proof, and, consequently, is established prior to the process of proof.<sup>43</sup> You can refute what is adventitious, but not that which is your essential nature; much as the heat of fire cannot be refuted by the fire itself.

Regarded in this light, the conscious self, according to the advaita theory, is an irrepressible reality,

<sup>41</sup> *Kenopaniṣad*, I, 3.

<sup>42</sup> Ānandagiri illustrates the point by the help of light which, as we have seen above, is the most favourite analogy with the advaita thinkers.

<sup>43</sup> *Ātmā tu pramāṇādīryavahārāśrayatvāt prāgeva pramāṇādīryavahārāt siddhyati*. S. B., II, 3. 7.

and what Bradley says with regard to the principle of contradiction may with equal justice be applied to it, namely, that its absolute reality is proved by the fact that, "either in endeavouring to deny it, or even in attempting to doubt it, we tacitly assume its validity"<sup>44</sup>

From the dictum that there is no consciousness, which has so far been considered, to materialism there is but a short way. The latter does not deny the fact of consciousness, but accepting it as an indubitable fact, materialism considers it to be a product of matter. But none the less materialism and the doctrine of no-consciousness meet on the confusion of consciousness with the content; the only difference is that the latter has the merit of drawing the inevitable consequences of the fundamental postulate which has always been at the basis of

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<sup>44</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 120. This in fact contains the essence of Kant's transcendental deduction. The necessity and universality of the principles of the understanding are ultimately proved by the fact that they are the ground of the possibility of experience; that which makes experience possible is for that very reason necessary. In this sense the unity of consciousness, according to Kant, is a transcendental condition of all experience and all knowledge, it is the ultimate presupposition of knowledge. The advaita conception of svayamsiddha essentially conveys the same meaning; and if Bradley condemns the self as a mere appearance while accepting the absolute validity of the law of contradiction, that is probably due to his assumption that the self, if real, must be an objective content.

the former. And this postulate it may be worth while to urge at the risk of repetition, lies in assuming that consciousness is one object among others. Once this assumption has been swallowed, the wood is sure to be lost in the trees, and, consequently, the relational theories of consciousness may very aptly be styled as the natural nemesis of objectifying the subject.

As the purport of the present chapter is to provide an antitoxin for counteracting the ruinous tendency of contemporary thought to what we have called above unhealthy scepticism in respect of the most ultimate principle of thought and existence, a full and detailed examination of the anti-advaita theories of consciousness, which is undertaken below, is not called for in the present context. In fact, all these anti-advaita theories may be ultimately traced back to the root-fallacy which has inevitably led to the relational theory of the present century; and the *reductio ad absurdum* which it illustrates in a very piquant and clear manner ought to force philosophical thought to retrace its steps and come to a clearer consciousness of the limits within which alone scepticism can exercise its healthy influence.

## CONSCIOUSNESS AS A QUALITY

The paradox implicit in the denial of consciousness and in every attempt to translate it in terms of something other than itself shows that here at least we are dealing with a reality that is irrepressible, whatever its ultimate status might be in the democracy of things. When, however, its reality is accepted as unchallengeable, it is still open to us to deny its foundational character and reduce it to a by-product of matter, an epiphenomenon or, in the words of Hodgson, a sort of foam, aura, or melody. In other words, the real strength of the position, generally known as materialism or naturalism, is not weakened to any appreciable degree even if we admit the epistemological priority of consciousness, for logical priority is apparently not incompatible with chronological posteriority. And it may well be imagined that consciousness, though prior to matter in the order of knowledge, is posterior to matter in the order of existence; it is this existential dependence that is emphasised by modern naturalism which, unlike the older forms of materialism, is ready to concede to the idealist's demand for a privileged place for consciousness in the field of knowledge.

The *advaita* reply to this modern form of materialism will be better understood if we start with Śaṅkara's polemic against that cruder type of materialism associated with the name of Cārvāka in Indian philosophy. Consciousness, according to it, is a by-product of matter and appears, like the intoxicating property of a drug, when the material elements are transformed into the shape of a physical body.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of Śaṅkara's criticism of the materialist's arguments consists in attacking the validity of a number of empirical generalisations by which the materialistic thesis has been sought to be supported. What is, however, of special interest for the modern thinkers is the amazingly idealistic vein in which he asks: What is the nature of that consciousness that is supposed by the materialist to have its origin in the material elements?<sup>2</sup> Consciousness, according to him, must either be perception of the elements and what springs from them, or it must be a quality of the material elements. But in either case we are landed in difficulties. In the former case, the elements and

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<sup>1</sup> *Cartanyam madaśaktivedvijñānam*—S B. III, 3. 53. It is, according to the Lokāyatikas, *bhūtadharma*—*Commentary on the Prāśnopanīṣad*, VI, 2. The materialists are described, in *Sarva-Sidhānta-Saṅgraha* II, 5, as those who ascribe everything to Nature as its cause and, consequently, consciousness is supposed to arise in the same way as the red colour is produced by the combination of betel, areca-nut and lime.

<sup>2</sup> S B III, 3, 54.



their products are objects of consciousness, and, as such, it cannot be their product; whereas in the latter case, it would be absurd to urge that physical qualities can objectify their own qualities, such as form and colour. It is consciousness alone that can make material things its objects, and it is as absurd to suppose that consciousness that is a quality or product of matter would yet make material things its objects as to think that fire can burn itself or that a trained acrobat can mount on his own shoulders. Śaṅkara's conclusion, therefore, is that consciousness must be different (*vyatireka*) from the material elements, and the self which is essentially knowledge (*upalabdhi-svarūpa*) is something other than the physical body

The force of these criticisms, it is evident, depends upon what has now become an idealistic commonplace, namely, first, that consciousness to which is presented every object cannot be identified with an object; and as matter is one of the objects that have a meaning only in so far as they are presented to consciousness, the latter must be entirely different from the former <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Nāhi bhūtabhautikadharmena satā caṭanyena bhūtabhautikam viśayīkriyaṇam—loc. cit.* It may be interesting to note that Śaṅkara's argument that a thing cannot act upon itself (*svātmanī kriyā-virodhāt*) has found favour with so accomplished a realist as Prof. Alexander: 'I cannot have knowledge of my mind in the sense of making it an object of contemplation, for that would mean that my mind could act upon itself'—*The Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 1910-11, p. 19.

Secondly, that which is an object of consciousness cannot be a precedent factor in the genesis of consciousness. These are the two principles underlying Śaṅkara's criticism,—principles that are also at the root of the idealist's polemic against materialism. Matter, it is remarked by Green, "is an element in a world of consciousness," and only as an element "can any material relation be known;" consequently, it would be absurd to explain "consciousness itself as one sort of such material relation; which is as if a physiologist should explain the vital process by some particular motion of a muscle which it renders possible."<sup>4</sup> That is, matter, if it is to explain the rise of consciousness, cannot be merely "the unknown negative of consciousness," cannot be external to consciousness; on the contrary, it is matter as *known* that alone provides an explanatory principle by which "the function of the soul, or anything else, can for us be explained."<sup>5</sup>

Thus Green, like his Indian predecessor, Śaṅkara, offers the same epistemological arguments against the materialistic thesis, and thinks that the knowledge of

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<sup>4</sup> *Works* I, p. 378. The absurdity of the materialist's procedure is illustrated by Green by the feat of Baron Munchausen in swinging himself across a stream by the sleeve of his own coat (*Ibid.*, p. 438). This is almost a reproduction of Śaṅkara's illustration of the trained acrobat mounting on his own shoulders.

<sup>5</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 13.

nature cannot be itself a part or product of nature, since "between the consciousness itself on the one hand, and on the other anything determined by the relations under which nature is presented to consciousness, no process of development, because no community, can be really traced."<sup>6</sup> Consciousness, for both Śaṅkara and Green, is, therefore, something *sui generis*, a reality that has none of the characters, belonging to the things that are known or knowable as objects (*viṣaya*): and, as such, it cannot be a product of the things, that have a meaning only *for* consciousness.

It is evident that such a criticism of materialism contains in a nutshell all the baffling puzzles that are responsible for the origin and perpetuation of the idealism-realism controversy in philosophy. Because a realist might still contend that the epistemological priority of consciousness is not inconsistent with its chronological posteriority; and, consequently, consciousness, though born of nature, may yet make nature its object. Such a retort, however, ignores the plain fact that the *quid* anterior to consciousness has no meaning for us, and so cannot be appealed to in explanation of anything; on the other hand, the very chronological order which is here contrasted with the logical order is a particularly conceived order, it is

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<sup>6</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 23.

something presented to consciousness, and here lies its efficiency for working as an explanatory principle. This is not, however, the place to assess the realism-idealism controversy in detail, which we have elsewhere attempted. But the important point is that materialism takes that to be the antecedent condition of consciousness which has a meaning only as presented to consciousness, and it matters little whether it is called matter, nature or history. That which makes nature possible, to borrow Kant's classical expression, cannot be a product of nature, and if nature is through and through historical, then, even this history has a meaning only *for* consciousness. The objects of knowledge, Śaṅkara urges, have temporal determinations, such as, past, present or future; but that *for* which these temporal relations have a meaning cannot be itself in time; it is in this sense an eternal presence.<sup>7</sup>

Śaṅkara's criticism of that type of spiritualism which posits the reality of a spiritual soul-substance underlying the fleeting states of consciousness, and of which Locke in the West and the thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school in India have been the most enthusiastic exponents, brings out the logical paradox of another theory of consciousness which has attracted a large number of accomplished thinkers by reason of its simplicity and apparent persuasiveness. Con-

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<sup>7</sup> *Sarvadā-vartamāna-svabhāva*—S. B. II. 3. 7.

consciousness, according to it, is not essentially a product of matter; it is, on the contrary, a quality supported by, and generated in, a spiritual substance, generally called the self or soul. It starts with the common-sense dualism of mind and matter, and then conceives knowledge as a quality which, though produced by matter, must reside in mind. Such a theory, it will be seen more clearly in the sequel, can be distinguished from materialism with the greatest difficulty; because consciousness is still conceived as a product, and the soul as a substratum transcending or lying beyond the conscious processes. The status of consciousness is still one of dependence, though it has now been transferred from the material to the spiritual substance; the soul may exist without consciousness, but the latter needs a crutch to support itself.<sup>8</sup>

The defect of such a mechanical conception of knowledge is beautifully summarised by Śaṅkara and

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<sup>8</sup> The very definition of knowledge as an effect produced by a sort of compact or contract between the eternal objects and the soul has the tendency to reduce the latter to an unconscious material substance. Cp. Gautama: *Indriyārthasannikarṣaṭpannam jñānam—Nyāya-Sūtra* I. 1. 4.; and Locke's description of the production of the ideas in the white paper'—*Essay*, Bk. II. Ch. I. 3. The perception of ideas according to Locke, is to the soul what motion is to the body, "not its essence, but one of its operations." And this would easily remind an Indian student of the famous statement of Jayanta: *Sacetanaścitā yogāt tadyogena vinā jadah—Nyāyamanjarī*, Gangādhara Śāstry's edition, Vol. III, Part 2, p. 432

E. Caird. According to the philosophers of the school of Kaṇāda, it is complained by Śaṅkara, consciousness is produced in the same way as the quality of red is produced in a jar through its connection with fire.<sup>9</sup> The psychological attitude of Locke, it is similarly remarked by Caird, leads him to treat the faculty of knowledge merely as an attribute of certain beings in the world, by which they are characterised and distinguished from other beings, so that, *e.g.*, as weight is the attribute of a stone, thought is the attribute of man.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the application of the categories of substance-attribute and cause-effect to consciousness, in the opinion of Śaṅkara and Caird alike, is the fundamental fallacy of this type of spiritualism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Agnighatasaṅgogaja-rohitādiguṇarot*—S.B. II. 3. 18. *Dravyamā rastu bhavati ghata ira rāgasamarāyi*—Śaṅkara's *Comm. on the Kēnopaniṣad* II. 4.

<sup>10</sup> *The Critical Philosophy of Kant* I, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> How far Śaṅkara's view here has come to be an established tenet of modern idealism may be seen from the emphatic observation of Green that the greatest writer must fall into confusions when he brings under the conceptions of cause and substance the self-conscious thought which is their source.—*Works* I, p. 109. Compare also Haldane's remark that the mentalists and the new realists have made the dangerous assumption about the adequacy of the category of substance and thus they treat knowledge as a causal result.—*Proc. of the British Academy*, Vol. IX.

The misapplication of the categories of substance and cause to the conscious principle, which is encouraged alike by the grammatical forms of language and the popular modes of thinking, is one of those philosophical superstitions that win popular approval at the sacrifice of logical profundity by following the natural inclinations of ordinary thought and speech. Descartes' definition of the self as a spiritual substance of which thought is but an attribute, or Gautama's description of knowledge as a quality of the soul (*ātmagauṇa*), would, by reason of its very seductive simplicity, lead to the triple distinction of knowledge, the knower and the object of knowledge, described as *triputī* in Indian philosophy. It has received the certificate of scientific authority at the hands of modern psychology and influenced the epistemological analysis of a large number of philosophers in all ages and countries. When I know the table, there is nothing apparently more simple than to analyse the total situation into the 'I,' the table and the process of knowledge; and the result is that knowledge is conceived as a temporary event arising out of the operation of the table upon the self and inhering in the latter. Thus, Rāmānuja, for instance, in his elaborate criticism of the position of Śaṅkara, appeals to experience in order to discredit the theory of knowledge which takes it to be foundational, and, as such, without a self to support it or an object to

produce it. The very nature of knowledge, it is urged, is to manifest an object to the self; it can as little be its own object as its own subject. Knowledge, therefore, must be taken to be a particular property of the self (*ātmano dharmaviśeṣaḥ*). Similarly, A. S. Pringle-Pattison defies Fichte's imperious tone and asserts emphatically that "to speak of thought as self-existent, without any conscious being whose the thought is, conveys no meaning to our minds. Thought *exists* only as the thought of a thinker; it must be centred somewhere. To thought *per se* we can attribute neither existence nor causal activity; and this being so, it can have no place in metaphysics as a theory of Being."<sup>13</sup>

The plethora of paradoxes and inconsistencies hidden beneath the triple division of knower, knowledge, and object known, would have long rendered the psychological analysis a thing of the past, if it had not enjoyed the privilege of being entrenched behind the established usages of our ordinary thought and speech. All the vices of presentationism and the objective attitude of mind are concealed beneath its

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<sup>12</sup> *Sanāt nāma kācib nirāśrayā nirviṣayā vā atyantānu-  
pabaddhena sambharati—Śrībhāṣya I. 1. 1.*

<sup>13</sup> *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 78. Cp. J. Ward's remark that it is futile to attempt, by means of phrases such as consciousness or the unity of consciousness, to escape the implication of a conscious subject.—*Psychological Principles*, p. 40.



outward cloak of simplicity; such as the confusion of the subject-object relation with an inter-objective relation, the error of identifying the knower with mind or sentience, and so on. Historically, whenever the light of critical thought has attempted to pierce through its outer cloak, it has developed in the directions of materialism, scepticism, and agnosticism. Thus, for instance, its materialistic tendency is disclosed in the speculations of Locke and the thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school who found it hard to distinguish the soul-substance from a bit of matter; its sceptical tendency is brought to prominence in the philosophy of Hume and the Buddhists, whose search for a permanent soul ended in the theory of no-soul, and its agnostic tendency manifests itself in that particular theory of self which is represented by James Ward in modern thought and by Prabhākara in Indian Philosophy.

It may be interesting to see how the germ of these apparently conflicting theories is implicit in the psychological analysis of knowledge. If we start on our analysis with the simple fact of perception, it may be said to consist of three factors, namely, the object that is perceived, the percipient, and the process of perception. Out of these, the last factor is apparently the result produced by the object upon the percipient mind. Perception, though a product of the mind-object relation, reveals the object to the mind or the

self and the self is something over and above the perceptual process which inheres in it.<sup>14</sup> As perception cannot fly about without a support, it is natural to refer it to the self to whom is presented the object. Thus, the self becomes a substance of which knowledge is an attribute.

It is easy to see that the place of the self in such an analysis is extremely anomalous. And the puzzles manifest themselves as soon as it is asked: how is the self known? As all objects are, *ex hypothesi*, presented to the self, and are revealed to the self, the difficulty of knowing the self must be enormous in such a scheme. It is not possible, as rightly urged by Śaṅkara, to know the self in such an analysis, because all its activities, such as hearing, seeing, speaking or reflecting, must be directed only to the objects and not to the self.<sup>15</sup>

The first impulse of thought in face of this difficulty would be to regard the self also as a type of object. As objects alone are revealed by know-

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<sup>14</sup> It is not necessary here to insist on the distinction between Mind and Soul, or on the three-fold contact which, in the opinion of the Nyāya thinkers, brings about perceptual knowledge.

<sup>15</sup> *Śraṇāṇḍīkriyāśca sraṇīyayesu eva, na hi mantaryāt anyatra manturmananakriyā sambhavati*—Śaṅkara's summary at the end of his commentary on *Āitareyaopaniṣad*, Cb. IV.

ledge, the knower also must be one object among other objects. This position is ably defended by the philosophers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, and by their modern successors, such as W. James and Prof Alexander. The self, therefore, is itself an object of knowledge, and, like all other objects, must be revealed or proved. It is, in other words, a *prameya* among other *prameyas*, as put by the Naiyāyikas. And if this circumstance is combined with the other part of the analysis, namely, that the self is the substance to which knowledge belongs as a quality, the soul-substance becomes indistinguishable from a bit of matter; it is, therefore, 'openly taken to be material (*jada*) by Jayanta Bhatta, when consciousness is not produced in it.

When, on the other hand, the inconsistency involved in the admission of a self as an object among other objects, to which all objects are yet supposed to be presented, is clearly seen, thought moves forward to another position; namely, that the so-called self which is distinguished by the psychological analysis from all objects is a mere fiction of imagination; whatever exists must be an object; and, consequently, the self that is supposed to be different from the world of objects is a mere nothing like the son of a barren woman. Thus emerges the theory of no-soul that is ably defended by the Buddhists and their modern exponent, Hume.

The sceptical conclusions of the Buddhists and those of Hume, or Prof. E. B. Holt, though arising out of the psychological analysis by an immanent logical dialectic, must compel thought to move forward once more to a more satisfactory position. As the self which is the knower of all objects cannot itself be denied without reducing the psychological analysis to a logical camouflage, and as the self cannot be known as an object, it is something *sui generis* that is known, *not* as an object, but as the subject to which all objects are referred as their inexpugnable basis. James Ward's theory of the Pure Ego which is *within* experience though unknowable as an object, as well as Prabhākara's theory of self that cannot be known as an object, but known only as the subject, are illustrative of the agnostic tendency implicit in the psychological analysis of knowledge.

Even this brief consideration of the apparently simple division of the perceptual situation into three factors indicates some of the puzzles that develop out of its initial assumption. And the penalty which philosophers have to pay for an uncritical alliance with commonsense is clearly shown by the materialistic, sceptical and agnostic tendencies of the present-day philosophy. The very first assumption of the triple division,—namely, that the self can be known under the same conditions as the objects—must, therefore, be challenged; and it is an eminently inter-

esting fact that both Śaṅkara and the modern idealists have actually challenged it. The categories of substance, attribute or causality, they urge, are not the conditions under which the conscious principle can be known. The self and the not-self, it is emphasised by Śaṅkara at the very beginning of his principal work, are as different from each other as light is from darkness. The conditions of objective knowledge, therefore, are inapplicable to the self which, like the light of the physical world, is presupposed by all objects that are ever known. Śaṅkara, consequently, has repeatedly warned those who would seek to know the self against the misapplication to it of the conditions of objective knowledge. What, then, are the conditions of knowledge?

The very first condition of objective knowledge, it is held by Śaṅkara, is (a) that an object should possess a generic unity with specific difference. "An object can be known only when it is differentiated from things other than itself."<sup>16</sup> The lotus, for instance, is known only in so far as it is distinguished by its attributes of blue colour and sweet scent from objects other than itself with which yet it belongs to the same class. The category of substance-attribute, therefore, implies for its application a plurality of things that should at the

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<sup>16</sup> *Evam hi tat jñānam bhavati yadanyebhyaḥ virdhā it m*  
—Commentary on the Taittirīya Upaniṣad II. 1

same time belong to the same genus.<sup>17</sup> (b) The characteristics of an object, such as generic unity, specific qualities and action, it is urged elsewhere, are the conditions of intelligible discourse on it.<sup>18</sup>

How far such observations anticipate the modern idealistic analysis of knowledge needs no particular comment. "Thought is always distinction," it is held by E. Caird, and consequently "a thing which has nothing to distinguish it is unthinkable, but equally unthinkable is a thing which is so separated from all other things as to have no community with them."<sup>19</sup> The necessity of finitude and determinate knowledge, it is similarly remarked by William Wallace, is that everything finite, every 'somewhat,' has somewhat else to counteract, narrow, and thwart it.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Hegelian analysis of determinate knowledge contains the essence of Spinoza's celebrated *determinatio negatio est*. and it is clearly this which

<sup>17</sup> *Yadā hi anekāni dravyāṇi ekajātīyāni anekavīśeṣaṇa-  
yogīni tadā viśeṣaṇa-ya artharatnam—loc. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> *Tat anyasmai upadeṣṭum śakyam jātī-yaṇa-kīyā-  
viśeṣaṇaḥ—Com. on the Kenopaniṣad I. 3. Cp. also the  
Commentary on the Gītā XIII. 12: "Every word employed  
to denote a thing can do so only in so far as it is associated  
with a certain genus, or a certain act, or a certain quality,  
or a certain mode of relation. Thus cow and horse imply  
genera, cook and teacher imply acts, white and black imply  
qualities, wealthy and cattle-owner imply possession."*

<sup>19</sup> *Hegel*, p. 135.

<sup>20</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 424.

Śaṅkara emphasises in his analysis of objective knowledge. But when one real thing is thus necessarily limited by another, it is equally important to remember that both must belong to one class, they must be *ekajūṭīyāni* as put by Śaṅkara. Even the Cartesian dualism between the spiritual and the material substance has for its presupposition a class-unity, that is, Descartes could separate them only by unconsciously bringing them under the common concept of substance. Apart from this community they could not be defined in antithetical and mutually conflicting terms. All differences and conflicts, as tersely put by Vācaspati Miśra, would be impossible if there had been difference at their foundation. The judgment, 'intellect is non-eternal,' for instance, cannot conflict with the judgment, 'the soul is eternal.'<sup>21</sup> Hence, conflicts can neither be foundationless (*anāśraya*) nor can they exist when there is difference at the very basis of the conflicting ideas or judgments (*bhinnāśraya*).

As for the second point in Śaṅkara's analysis of knowledge, the development of the doctrine of categories from Aristotle to Kant and Hegel is but an illuminating exposition of the advaita position. Kant's only criticism of the Aristotelian doctrine, as is well known, was that the latter lacked a definite principle

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<sup>21</sup> *Na ca bhinnāśrayā viruddhāh—Brahmasūtra-Śaṅkara-Bhāṣyam* with nine Commentaries, edited by Mm. A. K. Sastri, p. 821.

according to which the exhaustiveness of the list of categories could be secured. A similar criticism may well be levelled against Śaṅkara's haphazard lists of the categories of objective knowledge. Yet, it may perhaps be remarked without running the risk of being accused of an over-zeal that Śaṅkara was essentially expressing the same truth that inspired Kant's doctrine at a later age. The categories of determinate knowledge, though universally valid of all objects that can be ever known and discussed, are yet inapplicable to the conscious principle for which the objects have a meaning. Generic unity, specific difference, act, quality, relation, etc., are supposed by Śaṅkara to be the ultimate conditions of the objects. To these he sometimes adds space, time, causality and non-contradiction.<sup>22</sup> It is obvious that there is no attempt here to deduce these categories from a principle; but Śaṅkara is emphatic that they are not applicable to the conscious principle except through a sort of 'natural confusion' that permeates commonsense.<sup>23</sup>

This important truth about the validity and limits of the categories has frequently escaped the notice of those who are anxious to accommodate their theories to the dictates of unreflective commonsense at the sacrifice of logical insight and depth. The question

<sup>22</sup> *Deśa-kāla-nimitta-sampattirādhāśca*—S.B. III, 2, 3

<sup>23</sup> This, as we have seen in *Ch. II*, was also Green's reading of Kant's theory of self as a thing-in-itself.



that inevitably forces itself upon us at this point is whether such an analysis of knowledge can be successfully extricated from agnosticism that is supposed to be associated with the self-theories of Kant and the Neo-Kantians and Neo-Hegelians. This important question, however, must be postponed to a later stage of our discussions with this remark that Śaṅkara's theory of self, when rightly interpreted, does indicate a way out of the paradoxes of agnosticism and scepticism. Presentationism and agnosticism are the two fatal positions that have been historically responsible for the confusion of the real self with the pseudo-egos, and none of these can be fitted into the advaita theory of self. In the meantime, it will be interesting to follow a few steps further Śaṅkara's criticism of the psychological analysis of knowledge.

The fatal paradoxes of the psychological attitude are scarcely seen in their true colour even by some of the penetrating thinkers of our time. Prof. Alexander, for instance, would fain avoid behaviourism in his theory of perception while accepting the commonsense doctrine of compresence of mind with the things it knows. But behaviourism, as it is explained by Prof. Watson and the American neo-realists, is but the logical consequence of the initial supposition that the self is one object among others in the democracy of things. This inevitable result, however, was actually drawn from an identical premise by the philosophers

of the Nyaya Vaiśeṣika school who fearlessly reduced the self to a bit of matter in the intervals of consciousness, such as sleep or swoon. Even Locke, as is well known, found it difficult to believe that the soul would always think. Once it is accepted that consciousness results from the mechanical relation between the mind and the external thing, the very logic of the situation would lead to the theory that the perception of ideas is to the soul "what motion is to the body, not its essence, but one of its operations."<sup>24</sup> Consciousness in such a theory, as put by Śaṅkara, is an adventitious attribute,<sup>25</sup> and the soul an essentially unconscious thing (*Svataḥ acetanaḥ dravyamātrasvarūpaḥ*.)

Śaṅkara's criticism of such a theory must be of fascinating interest for modern philosophy if we start with the simplest type of perceptual knowledge. Knowledge, from the psychological standpoint, we are told by no less a psychologist than W. James, presupposes "two elements, mind knowing and thing known," and to the psychologist, therefore, minds are "objects, in a world of other objects."<sup>26</sup> There are, he admits, some "ultimate puzzles" in the psychological study of knowledge, but the psychologist need trouble himself about them "no more than the

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<sup>24</sup> *Essay*, II. 1. 10.

<sup>25</sup> *Agantukam ātmana'cātanyam*—*S.B.* II, 3. 18.

<sup>26</sup> *Principles of Psychology* I, p. 183.

geometer the chemist or the botanist do who make precisely the same assumptions as he.” This, however, does not prevent W. James from describing perception as that process by which the mind “supplements a sense-impression by an accompaniment or escort of revived sensations, the whole aggregate of actual and revived sensations being solidified or ‘integrated’ into the form of a percept, that is, an apparently immediate apprehension or cognition of an object now present in a particular locality or region of space.”<sup>27</sup> For such an analysis of perception, he might as well turn to any treatise by the Indian philosophers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. Śrīdhara’s analysis, for example, runs as follows:—When we see the colour of a nice fruit, we remember its taste that was experienced on a previous occasion; this remembrance creates in us a desire to eat the fruit, this is followed by an effort for its attainment. This effort in its turn produces a modification in the organ of taste in the form of salivation flowing from the roots of the teeth. Now this flow of saliva cannot be due to any intelligence in the sense-organ itself, because each of the two sense-organs engaged in the perception of the fruit perceives one quality only, one perceives the colour while the other perceives the tastē; and, consequently, the sight of the colour could not bring about recognition of the

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted approvingly by W. James in *Principles of Psychology* II, p. 79, from Sully’s *Outlines*, p. 153

taste But as a matter of fact we do find this modification in taste. Hence, there must be some unitary principle apart from the sense-organs which cognises both, and which remembers the taste on seeing the colour.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from the comparative value of these descriptions by W. James and Śrīdhara respectively, what is to be noted is that the most important point emphasised by both is the factor of integration or unification involved in perceptual knowledge. The only difference is that while Śrīdhara openly refers this factor to the self, James avoids it in the present context, and only remarks that the consciousness of the object, instead of being the consciousness of the few qualities or attributes, "must have the unity which every 'section' of our stream of thought retains so long as its objective content does not sensibly change."

The question which cannot be simply dismissed as an "ultimate puzzle" in an analysis of perception is whether the synthetic character of perception, which both James and Śrīdhara rightly emphasise, admits of a plausible explanation within the presuppositions of their psychological attitude. The problem, in other

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<sup>28</sup> *Nyāyakandali*, Vizianagram Sanskrit Series, p. 84. A much shorter analysis is given by Praśastapāda who supplies a nice analogy of the self to a person looking through two windows, on p. 70 of the *Bhāṣya*.

words, is that of reconciling the synthetic factor in perception with the initial assumption that the self or mind is one 'object' among other objects. An object clearly implies a subject for whom alone it has a meaning; on the contrary, it would be evidently absurd to suppose that an object perceives another object. In fact, this is roundly admitted by James himself. "The psychologist," he remarks, "stands outside of the mental state he speaks of. Both itself and its object are objects for him."<sup>29</sup> The psychologist, however, James continues, gets easily led to suppose that the thought, which is *of* the object, "knows it in the same way in which he knows it, although this is often very far from being the case." And the result is that "The most fictitious puzzles have been introduced into our science by this means." Indeed, the entire exposition of "The Psychologist's Fallacy" by which James seeks to distinguish the status of the psychologist from the "thoughts" or the "subjective data of which he treats" is a most interesting and instructive recantation of the assumption that the cognitive relation is an inter-objective relation. For it shows clearly that the psychologist cannot be one of those data he studies, and so his relation to them is entirely different from "*their relations to their objects.*" To identify these two types of relations, in

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 196.

the language of Śaṅkara, would be as absurd as to urge that the forms of the physical body may perceive their own forms as well as those of other things.<sup>30</sup> To insist that there is no subject, or that the so-called subject is but an object, Śaṅkara contends in another context, is not less preposterous than the statement that "the form is seen though there is no eye."<sup>31</sup>

If then it has to be admitted that all objects have a meaning only for a subject, the next question which must force itself upon every thoughtful mind is: What is the nature of that which can account for synthetic knowledge? That every perception involves a synthesis, a unification, solidification or integration is rightly pointed out by James and Śrīdhara alike. But this synthesis is evidently incompatible with pan-objectivism as well as materialism. The perceptual data come in the form of a successive series, when one is there the other has either disappeared or is yet to come. They form, as James aptly puts it, a stream of thought. Moreover, each of the sense-organs, as urged by Śrīdhara, perceives only one quality of the perceived fruit. Apparently, therefore, the percep-

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<sup>30</sup> *Rūpādayah anyonyam svam svam rūpaṁ ca vijānīyuh*—*Commentary on the Kathopanīṣad* IV 3. The whole of Śaṅkara's contentions here may be taken as an effective criticism of pan-objectivism or presentationism dominating the contemporary tendencies of philosophy.

<sup>31</sup> *Commentary on the Praśnopanīṣad*, Question VI.

tion of an object must imply an abiding and relatively permanent principle that does not disappear with the successive 'sections' of thought or the successively apprehended qualities of the fruit. If it be assumed that 'thought' within each personal consciousness is always changing, then, a relatively unchanging principle seems to be all the more necessary for that solidification or integration which perception implies. Howsoever sensibly continuons 'thought' might be, the changing 'sections' cannot integrate themselves into the perception of an object possessing different aspects or attributes. In so far as they change and are in succession, it cannot be explained, as contended by Sāṅkara, how the aggregates (*samudāya*) are brought about.<sup>32</sup> In an identical tone it is asked by Green: How can a perpetual flux be collected?<sup>33</sup> The very term 'collection of ideas,' Green urges against Hume's doctrine of universal flux, "is an absurdity" on such a supposition.<sup>34</sup>

In fact, James hides this difficulty in reconciling his theory of ever-changing thought with the unity of the perceived object by insisting, against the associationists, that perception is not "a sum of distinct psychic entities;" on the contrary, it is "one state of

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<sup>32</sup> *S.B.* II. 2. 18.

<sup>33</sup> *Works* I, p. 178.

<sup>34</sup> *Samudāyabhāvanūpapatih*, as put by Sāṅkara.

mind or nothing.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, he agrees with the critics of associationist-psychology in thinking it obvious that "a bundle of separate-ideas would never form one thought at all" and that "if things are to be thought in relation they must be thought together, and in one *something*." But the difficulty of reconciling this unity with the changing thoughts is explained away by assuming that all things that are thought in relation "are thought from the outset in a unity."<sup>36</sup>

The real difficulty is thus kept exactly where it was left by Hume. And the only available solution of the problem is to be found in such remarks of Śaṅkara or Green as that in order to the successive events being related even in the way of sequence, there must be some unit other than the events, and not passing with them, through relation to which they are related to each other.<sup>37</sup> This abiding principle must be conceived as "that to which the past is yet present, and present is past."<sup>38</sup> It is "a being which is neither event nor series of events, to which there is no before or after."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 80,

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* I, p. 278.

<sup>37</sup> *Works* II, p. 15

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> *Works* I, p. 127. *Cp.* Śaṅkara's notion of the self as an eternal presence—*S.B.* II, 3, 7.



The philosophers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school escape from James's perplexities by their admission of a permanent principle over and above the sense-data. But as the materialistic implications of pan-objectivism are brought out in their analysis more clearly than in that of James, the paradoxes here are as insoluble as in the latter. For Locke, there is nothing to exclude the possibility of even matter being endowed with the power of thinking. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers, on the other hand, have been unanimous in their contention that the perception of an object implies the synthetic function of a permanent principle. Neither matter nor the sense-organs, it is held, can be the self, because these cannot account for the synthesis involved in the perception of an object through different senses. The object which I have seen through the eyes, it is argued by Vātsyāyana, is now touched through the skin, and these two types of sense-knowledge, the visual and the tactual, refer to the same object as well as to the same self.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, as we have seen above, Praśastapāda as well as Śrīdhara see clearly that perception implies a permanent self which holds together the colour and the sound reported respectively by two different sense-organs; the self, in other words, must be a synthetic principle (*ubhayadarśī*).

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<sup>40</sup> *Ekaviṣayau cemau pratyaṃyau ekakartṛkau pratisandhīyete—Commentary on the Nyāya-Sūtra III, 1, 1.*

Thus, they insist, on the one hand, that matter has no synthetic function; on the other hand, consciousness is supposed by them to be a quality generated in an essentially unconscious soul-substance which, as we have seen, is unreservedly declared material (*jāda*) by Jayanta, when it is not connected with consciousness. But how can these two aspects of the theory be reconciled with each other? It may either be said that the unconscious soul possesses the synthetic function, or that it belongs to consciousness. In the former case, the soul cannot be distinguished from matter, and then all efforts to prove their incompatibility would be futile; the latter alternative, on the other hand, would amount to the admission that the synthetic function belongs to an intermittent quality of the soul, and not to its essential nature. Such a transient consciousness cannot evidently discharge the function of a synthetic principle which, therefore, as they themselves see it clearly, must be a permanent principle. Thus the possibility of synthesis remains unexplained within the assumptions of the psychological theory of self. The transience of consciousness and the permanence of the unconscious soul-substance are the two fatal assumptions which must ruin the psychological analysis of perception. The simplest perceptual knowledge implies a synthesis of recognition, as rightly urged by Kant; it is equally realised by the thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. But

while the former sees it clearly that such a synthesis implies a permanent conscious principle which he calls *transcendental apperception*, the latter leave it unexplained and unreconciled with their initial assumptions.

It is evident then that neither James nor Vātsyāyana and Śrīdhara have really explained the synthetic character of perception, though they have rightly stressed it in their respective theories. Synthesis, consequently, remains an inexplicable mystery, as incompatible with the conception of self as a stream of thought as with that of an unconscious permanent soul supporting impermanent knowledge-events. James, like the philosophers of the *Vijñāna-āda* school of Buddhism, seeks to reduce the self to a 'passing thought' thus reminding us of the "flux of perceptions" of Hume on the one hand, and of the "*Vijñāna-santāna*" of the Buddhist, on the other. The prospect of reconciling such a theory of self with the unity of the object of perception appears to be as far as ever. The thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, on the other hand, sought, like their modern descendants, to escape from the puzzles by insisting on a permanent principle; but this partial solution lost all its logical stability on account of the objectivist and materialistic implications of their theory of self. No aggregation or combination is explicable, as tersely put by Śaṅkara, without the supposition of a *conscious*

*permanent principle* <sup>41</sup> Neither a material substance however permanent it might be, nor 'passing thoughts,' howsoever immaterial they might be, would account for aggregation.

If we now remember the common assumption of the doctrine of soul-substance and that of a changing self, we may easily detect the dialectic of thought underlying both and adjudicate upon their relative merits. This common assumption, as we have seen, is that the self is one object among other objects. Once this step is taken, thought must move almost automatically in accordance with the first principle of determinate knowledge which, as formulated by Śaṅkara, is the principle of generic unity with specific difference.<sup>42</sup> Each object, therefore, must not only be brought under the common notion of 'object,' but it must have some specific attributes to distinguish it from the other objects. It matters little whether the distinguishing attribute is selected from the world of matter or that of mind, whether, *i.e.*, it is a physiological response as in behaviourism or knowledge inhering in the soul as urged by the spiritualists. In either case, the particular 'object' which is called the self must be brought under the category of substance-

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<sup>41</sup> *Samudāyāpīṣṭh, samudāyabhāvānupapattih, kutah, samudāyīnām acetanatvāt. . . . anyasya ca kasyacit cetanasya . . . . sthirasya saṁhantuh anabhyupagamāt—S B. II. 2, 18.*

<sup>42</sup> *Supra*, p. 145

attribute, and so far the logic of the position remains identical. The substance in such a theory, again, must be something in addition to the attribute, and if the attribute is taken to be knowledge or consciousness the substance must inevitably be an unconscious 'something.' Thus pan-objectivism leads necessarily to materialism.

James avoids the materialistic consequence of pan-objectivism by an evidently arbitrary refusal to apply the category of substance-attribute to the fleeting 'thoughts.' This is, however, arbitrary; for if the mind studied by psychologists is one object in a world of other objects, if it is, in other words, *primus inter pares*, its claim to the democratic status can be maintained only through its differentiating attributes. There can be no generic unity without specific difference, and plurality can be sustained only by specific qualities.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> It may be noted here that pan-objectivism as well as subjectivism meet on a common error. Whether all things are supposed to be mere objects or mere subjects, we commit in either case the fallacy of accepting only one-half of the first principle of determinate knowledge. James no doubt avoids the difficulty of Hume and the Buddhists by implicitly assuming a physical world which is different from the 'minds' that know it. But he saves his theory from the materialistic nemesis of spiritualism by refusing to make explicit what is implied by the distinction.

## CONSCIOUSNESS AND CHANGE

Our examination of the current theory of perception, in the last chapter, has brought out some of its imperfections. Perceptual knowledge, we have seen, implies a permanent conscious principle without which its synthetic character remains inexplicable. This conscious principle, we have further seen, cannot be brought under the category of substance-attribute, or, as a matter of fact, any of the categories of objective knowledge. This will be made more clear and convincing by a further examination of the factors in perception.

The different qualities of the object, such as colour, taste, smell, etc., are apprehended one after another as so many isolated data of perception; each has its appropriate sense-organ through which alone it can affect the mind. That is, each sensible quality throws the mind into a particular type of change, so that the mental modification stimulated by the colour is different from that produced by the sound. These mental modifications are so many events in the life-history of the individual, which begin and cease, and, as such, may be distinguished from the external thing that endures and persists through different moments

of time. It does not matter in the least whether these modifications are called changes in the mind, modifications of sensibility or states of *antahkarana*, provided it is remembered that they are perishing existences, while the thing apprehended through them has a unity, identity and permanence. "The act of thinking," it is remarked by Prof. Stout, "is an event which happens in our own mental history; the object is a meaning which is the same whenever it is apprehended."<sup>1</sup> These acts of apprehending, it is further contended, are distinct events in the time-order of our conscious life, but "the sensible quality is not an event in the history of my experience at all."

The most important thing to be remembered here is that even the 'acts of apprehending' are real events in a real time-order, though they belong to the subjective side of our experience. This distinction between the mental events and the permanent objects brings out all the more clearly the necessity of postulating a permanent principle for explaining the synthesis in perception—a principle that does not pass away with the passing mental events but holds them together into the concept of one object. It is from this standpoint that Green complains about the mischievous implications of "certain current phrases of modern psychology." "We speak of consciousness univer-

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<sup>1</sup> *Manual of Psychology, Fourth Edition*, p. 101.

sally, without qualification or distinction, as a succession of states; and the figure of the stream is the accepted one for expressing the nature of our spiritual life." On a more careful reflection, however, it will appear that though the figure of the stream may be applicable to "the relation between stages of the process by which the knowledge or perception is arrived at," yet it is wholly inapplicable to the conscious principle implied in "knowledge even of the most elementary sort."<sup>2</sup> Because, "it is essential to every act of knowledge that the related facts should be present together in consciousness." Green's thesis, therefore, is "Our experience has two characteristics of which neither admits of being reduced to or explained by the other. On the one hand it is an order of events in time, consisting in modifications of our sensibility. On the other hand it is a consciousness of those events—a consciousness of them as a related series, and as determined in their relations to each other by relation to something else, which is from the first conceived as other than the modifications of our sensibility."

Green's analysis of knowledge is in fact inspired by that of Kant. Recognition for Kant, as is well known, can be explained only by postulating an identical consciousness without which "I should never

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<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena, Fifth Edition*, p. 64.



be conscious of the various members of the series as forming one whole."<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, it must be realised that "in the flux of inner phenomena there can be no unchanging or permanent self." But, on the other hand, it is equally important to remember that "no knowledge whatever, no unity and connection of objects, is possible for us, apart from that unity of consciousness which is prior to all data of perception, and without relation to which no consciousness of objects is possible."<sup>4</sup> "This pure, original, unchangeable consciousness," Kant admits clearly, "I call *transcendental apperception*."

Kant's distinction between the "flux of inner phenomena" on the one hand, and the identical consciousness which is prior to perceptual data, on the other, provides Green with a very important clue to a right analysis of perception. Perception, for him, involves at least a changing principle as well as an unchanging principle. The "successive states," we are told, "may be represented as waves of which one is for ever taking the place of the other." "In this sense different states of knowledge succeed each other in the individual, but not so the manifold constituents of that which in any act of knowledge is present to his mind as the object known; . . . . For a known object, as

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<sup>3</sup> Watson's *Selections*, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

known is a related whole the members are necessarily present together; . . . . None is before or after another.''<sup>5</sup>

The contrast of such an analysis of perception with what is supplied by Locke, James, and the modern psychologists on the one hand, and Vātsyāyana, Śrīdhara, and Rāmānuja, on the other, is too clear to require any elaborate explanation. The psychological analysis leaves the synthetic character of perception inexplicable for want of the important distinction, drawn by Kant and Green, between the changing and the unchanging principles which every concrete perceptual knowledge involves. And what must be eminently interesting for a modern philosopher is the similarity of Green's analysis with that of Śaṅkara. In fact, some of the trenchant remarks of the former on the theories of Locke, Lewes and Spencer might easily be taken for Śaṅkara's criticism of the thinkers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. No perception, according to the 'advaita' analysis, is possible without the function of two distinct principles, one of which undergoes modifications while the other remains unchanging and unmodified. The former is called *antaḥkaraṇa*, *citta*, or *buddhi*, and the latter *cit* or *bodha*. When I know, say the tree or the table, the unconscious *antaḥkaraṇa* assumes, or is modified

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* , p. 65.

into, different forms corresponding to the different aspects of the object that is known. But these mental modifications (*antaḥkāraṇa-vṛttis*) do not by themselves constitute knowledge; left to themselves, they are unconscious, and as such, incapable of combining themselves into the concept of a table or a tree. It is only in so far as consciousness (*cit*), which is other than the modes, holds together simultaneously the fragmentary mental modes that come in succession,—which therefore are aptly represented by Green as waves, and by the advaita thinkers as *vṛtti-pravāha*—that there is knowledge of the table. It is not necessary for our present purpose to enter into the confusing details about the origin of *antaḥkāraṇa* from *ajñāna* or about the number of functions that are ascribed to it by different thinkers of the advaita school. Nor need we defend the apparently absurd notion of the *antaḥkāraṇa* going out to the object through the senses and assuming the form of the object in the same way in which water runs through the drain to the basin and takes on the form of the latter, though such a defence is sometimes supposed to promote the cause of comparative philosophy.<sup>6</sup> The really important point for a correct analysis of perception is furnished by the 'advaita' distinction between *antaḥkāraṇa* and *cit*, the unconscious changing principle

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Prof. D. M. Datta's *The Six Ways of Knowing*, p. 61.

and the conscious unchanging principle; and it is important because their confusion has been mainly responsible for the imperfections in the psychological theories of perception in the West as well as in India.

In the light of these observations it will now be easy to appreciate the 'advaita' distinction between eternal knowledge and the fragmentary knowledge that is generally supposed to arise through the relation of the sense-organs to the external things. That our knowledge is transient and fleeting seems at first sight to be too obvious to call for any elaborate philosophical defence. I know the chair and then I know the table, I perceive the book on my table and then I perceive the green meadow stretching far and wide before my vision. When the chair is perceived, the table, the book and the meadow are not perceived by me; and similarly, when I perceive the meadow my knowledge of the chair has already disappeared. Thus our knowledge has the appearance of coming in the form of a stream of units that are constantly replacing one another. A further evidence of the fleeting character of knowledge is apparently furnished by sleep, swoon, and those intervals in the flow of psychical current that are found in hysteric patients. Do not these obvious facts of our life bear unquestionable testimony to the fragmentary character of knowledge and consciousness?

This obvious view is subscribed to by a large number of accomplished thinkers of the modern time as well as of an earlier age. If knowledge had been eternal, it is urged by Rāmānuja, it would also appear as eternal, but it does not in fact appear as such.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, what is obvious is that perceptual knowledge is a temporal event, it appears as conforming to the modes of time (*kāla-paricchinnaṭayā pralīteḥ*), so that the knowledge of a jar, for instance, comes into existence only so long as the jar is before us, and it goes out of existence as soon as the jar is removed from our presence. Similarly, Kaṇāḍa and his followers, it is pointed out by Śaṅkara, accept the view that consciousness is adventitious, for, "if the soul were of eternal intelligence, it would remain intelligent in the states of deep sleep, swoon, and spirit-possession"<sup>8</sup> These arguments of Rāmānuja and Kaṇāḍa against eternal knowledge are also at the root of Bradley's reluctance to admit anything like an eternal principle "It is hard indeed to fix any limit to the self's mutability." And, "if we add the requirement of psychical continuity, have we advanced much further? For obviously it is not known, and there seems hardly any way of deciding, whether the psychical current is without any break. Apparently, during sleep or other-

<sup>7</sup> *Nityam cet saṁvedanam svataḥsiddham, nityamityeva pratiyeta, na ca tathā pratiyate—Śrībhāṣya, loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> *S. B., II, 3, 18.*

wise, such intervals are at least possible; and if so, continuity, being doubtful, cannot be used to prove identity."<sup>9</sup>

The problem of personal identity must be postponed to a later stage of our discussions. The question that is important at this place is whether the most elementary type of perception can be explained without postulating a permanent conscious principle over and above the changing mental modes. Śaṅkara, like Kant and Green, as we have seen, is emphatic that perception implies such a synthetic principle. It will be interesting to follow his arguments, advanced from a slightly different standpoint. There are, he remarks significantly, two types of knowledge, the transitory and the permanent; of these the latter is the presupposition of the former.<sup>10</sup> "If the perceptual knowledge were not distinct from the eternal knowledge of the self," Śaṅkara remarks, "then the blind man could not see blue, yellow, etc., in his dreams." It must be noted, in order to do justice to this piece of argument, that the question raised here is not one of origin of the dream.<sup>11</sup> Whatever might have been

<sup>9</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> *Nityātmano dr̥ṣṭiḥ vāhyānityadr̥ṣṭeḥ grāhikā*—Summary at the end of *Āitareyaopaniṣad* III.

<sup>11</sup> On the question of the origin of dreams, the list of modern theories may be enlarged by the conflicting theories held by the Indian philosophers. A short list of the latter is given by Dr. J. N. Sinha in his *Indian Psychology*, Ch. XVI.

their causes our dream experiences are after all experiences of a type, and as such, imply a conscious principle as much as our waking experiences. If then all knowledge had been of sensuous origin, as the empiricists have contended, dreams would remain a mystery, as here there is admittedly no contact of the senses with the external things. Empirical knowledge (*laukikīdr̥ṣṭih*), it is observed in another context, is conditioned by mental modifications arising from the contact of the senses with sensibility; it appears and disappears.<sup>12</sup> Eternal knowledge (*paramārthikādr̥ṣṭih*), on the contrary, does not appear and disappear, as it is the very essence of the knower (*draṣṭuh svarūpatvāt*), much as heat and light form the essence of fire. In this sense, again, eternal knowledge may also be called the knowledge of the knower (*draṣṭurdr̥ṣṭih*), as distinct from sense-knowledge. There can be no destruction of the 'knower's knowledge,' nor can it be an object of sense-knowledge. The fleeting and fragmentary knowledge born out of the senses is something like a shadow (*praticchāyā*) of the 'knower's knowledge' and, consequently the latter which is in fact the pervading principle of the former cannot itself be revealed by sense-knowledge. Śaṅkara concludes his explanation of eternal knowledge with the remark, which will remind a modern

<sup>12</sup> *Caḥṣuḥsaṅyuktāntaḥkaraṇavrttiḥ, sū kriyate it, jāyate vinaśyati ca*—Com. on the *Bṛh. Up.* III. 4. 2.

student of the indignant tone of Fichte's observations in a similar context, that those who cannot understand the difference between what is commonly called the knower (*draṣṭā*) and the knower of knowledge (*drṣterdraṣṭā*), and interpret the latter also as implying an agent of which knowledge is an activity, exhibit only their intellectual weakness (*buddhidourbalyam*).

It is evident that Śaṅkara, in these arguments, is anxious to prove the reality of a foundational type of knowledge which is the presupposition of our fragmentary perceptual knowledge. It is called, indifferently, the "knower's knowledge" or the knower of perceptual knowledge. The difficulty here is due to the very nature of our discursive thinking which understands everything through distinctions and differentiations: and Śaṅkara is fully alive to them. When we talk of the self, he remarks, we must realise that its nature is such that "all distinctions of speech and thought are merged in it."<sup>13</sup> That is, when I distinguish between two things, I cannot myself be one of the terms of the relation of distinction. He who would try to understand the self through relational categories,—such as existence and non-existence, one and many, qualified and unqualified, etc.—is thought by him to be similar to a man who "would desire to

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<sup>13</sup> *Vāṇmanasayorlbhedā yatra ekam bhavati*—Com. on the *Ātameyopaniṣad*, loc. cit.



step up the sky as if Le climbed a flight of steps, or trace the path of fishes in water and of birds in the sky.<sup>14</sup> The self, in other words, being the basis of all distinctions, it cannot be an object of discursive knowledge. And the result is that even when we try to indicate the self as foundational knowledge, it is impossible completely to get rid of distinctions, represented in such phrases as "knower's knowledge," or "knower of knowledge," etc. But, then, we must bear in mind that the foundational knowledge being the presupposition of all distinctions, these phrases, though inevitable for every attempt to indicate what is beyond all distinctions, are not to be taken literally.

The point we are discussing here is so important for understanding Śaṅkara's theory of self that a short reference to the explanation offered by the celebrated author of *Bhāmati* may not be out of place. Though there is no difference in the innermost self, says Vācaspati Misra, yet we impose difference upon it and use such phrases as 'the consciousness of the person,' etc.<sup>15</sup> This, however, is nothing but an accommodation of what is in fact distinction-less to the requirements of our discursive knowledge; the difference, as

<sup>14</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> *Yadyapi pratyagātmanī 'nānyū prathā asti, tathāpi bhedopacārah, yathā puruṣasya caitanyaṃ' iti—Brahma-Sūtra-Śaṅkara-Bhāṣyam, with nine Commentaries, edited by Mm. A. Sastri, p. 405.*

put by him, is a mere imposition (*upacara*). The conscious self, he continues, must necessarily be presupposed as given in an immediate, non-objectifying, experience; for, without this self-experience no other things can be experienced, and, consequently, the whole world would be immersed in darkness.<sup>16</sup> It is clear that Vācaspati insists on the one hand that there is no difference within the conscious principle or self, though we are obliged to think and speak about it as if there were differences in it. On the other hand, he is equally anxious to point out that such an undifferentiated consciousness is not a mere myth, but given in a sort of immediate experience which is the necessary presupposition of all other experience.

As a help to a proper appreciation of Śaṅkara's views, it may be useful to remember here some of the permanent contributions the modern idealists have made to a sound theory of knowledge. We have acknowledged these contributions at different places, but they are so clearly put by the late Lord Haldane that an entire passage may be quoted at this place. Knowledge, he urges, creates its own distinctions within itself, and excepting through it and in its terms there is no intelligible significance to be found for either the self that knows or for the objects to which

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<sup>16</sup> *Avaśyam cidātmā aparokṣa abhyupatevyaḥ, tadapra-  
thāyān sarvasyāprothanena jagadāndhyaprasaṅgāt—Ibid.,  
p. 411.*

it is related. Knowledge may thus turn out to be the prius of reality, and, like the *Elan* of Bergson or *Will* of Schopenhauer, itself the ultimate reality, capable of expression in no terms beyond its own, inasmuch as creation is meaningless outside its scope. Things and our reflections on them must alike belong to it. If, indeed, the *Elan* or the *Will* is intelligible it can, in this view, be so only as the result of distinctions made within knowledge of some sort, and it must fall within it as its own mere form and not as reality independent of it. It may then appear in the end that it is only by what is called abstraction, by a separation made in reflection for limited ends and standpoints of a secondary and provisional nature, that knowledge has even come to seem to be anything else than a foundational fact, the ultimately real that can be rendered only in its own terms.<sup>17</sup> Hence, again, knowledge must not be regarded as a "property of a substance; it cannot be called a property even of the subject. It is the subject itself in its essential aspect."<sup>18</sup> Serious difficulties in the analysis of knowledge, it is remarked elsewhere, "seem to have arisen as soon as I fixed on the notion that my mind was a kind of thing, and that knowledge was a property of this thing."<sup>19</sup> It is recommended, there-

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<sup>17</sup> *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 150.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

fore, almost in the very language of Vācaspati, that we must abandon the habit of thinking of "consciousness as a property, the consciousness *of* a person."<sup>20</sup>

This passage, it must be admitted, is on the whole an illuminating exposition of Śaṅkara's contentions about the "knower's knowledge" and the "knower of knowledge." The self, when regarded in this respect, is the seer of sight or the very essence of the knower; and, consequently, it cannot be the object of the faculties of knowledge, as the term 'knowledge' is generally understood. In other words, the self in this sense is unseen (*adr̥ṣtam*), unheard of (*aśrutam*), not an object of reasoning (*amatam*), and not an object of knowledge (*avijñātam*).<sup>21</sup> It is similarly said at the beginning of the *Kenopaniṣad* to be the ear of the ear, mind of the mind, tongue of the tongue, life of the life, and eye of the eye. In this sense, again, it is described as being distinct from the known and above the unknown.<sup>22</sup>

The apparent contradiction in this definition of the self as both known and unknown is resolved by Śaṅkara in his explanation of the famous text of the

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* , p. 320

<sup>21</sup> *Com. on the Brh. Up.* III. 8, 11.

<sup>22</sup> *Anyadevotadvitāt atho aviditādadhā.* Lest it should be confused with a transcendent Absolute, Śaṅkara remarks that "it is clear that none other than one's own self can be distinct from both the Known and the Unknown"

*Kenopaniṣad* III. 4, where it is described as that which is "known in respect of every state of consciousness," or *pratibodhaviditam*. If the self be not known at all, it may be asked whether there is not a contradiction in holding at the same time that it is known. Here he starts with a significant distinction between the mental states involved in ordinary knowledge (*bouddhāḥ pratyayāḥ*) and the self for which all mental states become objects (*sarve pratyayā viṣayi-bhavanti yasya*). The self, he says, is the subject in relation even to the mental states, and so must be essentially Consciousness which, revealing as it does every one of the mental states, is indirectly indicated by them.<sup>23</sup> "There is no other way," it is emphatically said, "in which the innermost self can be known." The meaning evidently is that though the foundational knowledge or Consciousness cannot be known as an object, yet, its reality cannot be denied because it is implied by each and all mental processes indifferently. To put these contentions in terms of modern philosophy, the self, though not known as an object, is yet known as the transcendental ground or the ultimate logical implicate of all mental processes involved in knowledge. There could be no knowledge of a given object, such as the table or the chair, if we had not

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<sup>23</sup> *Sarvapratyayadarśi cicchaktisvarūpamātraḥ pratyayavira pratyayeṣu aviśiṣṭatayā lakṣyate.*

postulated the reality of a foundational type of knowledge which forms the background of the fragmentary knowledge that is produced piecemeal as the mind comes into relation with a particular aspect of the object, such as, its colour. The foundational knowledge, therefore, does not itself come into existence or goes out of existence with the origin and disappearance of the particular knowledges which, as put by Green, come as waves. On the contrary, perception requires sensibility as well as consciousness neither of which, to put it again in the language of Green, admits of being reduced to or explained by the other.

We are now in sight of the fallacy which vitiates the psychological analysis of perception, as offered by W. James, Srīdhara or Rāmānuja. The fallacy, to put it shortly, is that of confusing sensibility with consciousness. This leads to a mistaken transference of the characteristics of the former to the latter. Even the modifications of sensibility, as Green rightly urges, cannot account for perception; the mere '*vr̥tti*'s, as put by the advaita thinkers, do not explain knowledge. The fallacy, therefore, is characterised by the latter as one of confusion between *vr̥tti* and *bodha*. This fallacy in its turn may be traced to the assumption that the self is a substance and knowledge is a property, with its corollary that the self is a bit of matter—a position which is occupied by able thinkers who cannot rise above the linguistic exigencies.

The account of *vikalparitti* given in the Yoga philosophy illustrates very aptly the confusions created by linguistic forms in the way of philosophical thinking. It is defined as *vastuśūnyatvepi śabdājñāna-māhāmyanibandhano vyavahārah*—*Yoga-Bhāṣya* on the Sūtra 9. Literally translated, it means the mental modification created by the power of linguistic knowledge even in the absence of a corresponding reality. That is, the grammatical forms often mislead us into believing in realities which do not exist in the same forms. In illustration of these confusions, Vyāsa refers to a few popular modes of thought, such as, 'consciousness is the real nature of the self,' 'the arrow is staying,' 'the self is devoid of the quality of origin.' Thus, when it is said that consciousness is the real nature of the self, we are apt to think in the same form in which we think of the cow as belonging to Caitra. The remedy suggested by Yoga philosophy is called *Śabda-saṅketa-smṛti-pariśuddhi*, that is, the process of purging the mind of the memory of linguistic associations. And this is supposed to be a necessary precondition of the highest type of knowledge, called *nirvikalpa*. Similarly, it is said in *Ajñānabodhinī*, 34, a work generally attributed to Saṅkara, that such a phrase as 'the knowledge is yours' is to be interpreted as knowledge is yourself, much as the phrase 'the head of Rāhu' means that the head is Rāhu itself. Saṅkara, therefore, would agree that there are '*vikalparitti*'s in our knowledge, but he would not perhaps accept the Yoga method of removing them.

This must lead us naturally to examine the doctrine of self as dynamic, or as a growing entity. The theory of evolution which is the ruling conception of our age has been pressed by many thinkers into their

own service and the result is that it is widely believed to be a valuable key to a scientific theory of mind. The human mind, it is supposed, is the outcome of a long and highly specialized evolution.<sup>24</sup> It is true that there is still some amount of vagueness in the minds of the present-day thinkers in respect of the exact nature of the evolution which has given birth to the human mind, whether, *i.e.*, it is emergent, epigenetic, and creative, or it is simply a process that brings out what was already latent in the growing universe. Similarly, difficulties are felt in taking it as either teleological or mechanical, or purely indeterminate. But it is agreed on all hands that the function of a philosopher, as aptly put by Bergson, is to see "the material world melt back into a simple flux, a continuity of flowing, a becoming." And then only will it be possible for him to discover "real duration there where it is still more useful to find it, in the realm of life and of consciousness."<sup>25</sup> This is how Bergson concludes his monumental work which opened with the remark: "The existence of which we are most assured and which we know best is unquestionably our own," but what we find here is that I change without ceasing, and that "there is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing

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<sup>24</sup> Prof. L. T. Hobhouse, *Mind in Evolution*, p. 369.

<sup>25</sup> *Creative Evolution*, p. 390.



change every moment: if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow."

It is clear even from these short remarks of one of our influential thinkers how the modern theory of consciousness moves in the Humian atmosphere of pure flux and becoming. The world has no place for anything like a foundational consciousness which Śaṅkara and Haldane supposed to be indispensable for every type of knowledge. It may be, therefore, useful to remember some of the main contentions of Śaṅkara against the theory of flux; these contentions, it will be interesting to see, contain essentially an Indian answer to Hume which is not less effective than what was returned by Reid or Kant.

Śaṅkara in his principal work starts on a refutation of the theory of universal becoming by condemning the doctrine of the Vaiśeṣika school as semi-nihilistic. The appropriateness of this epithet is nowhere more clear than in its theory of fleeting consciousness which is supposed to arise out of the contact of the external things with the soul-substance through the sense-organs and the atomic mind. The psychological theory, as we have remarked above, can be distinguished from materialism only with the greatest difficulty; we may now see that it gravitates in two directions. In so far as consciousness is supposed to arise from the mechanical contact of things that are essentially unconscious, it points to materialism; on the other hand,

its theory of fleeting consciousness points unmistakably to the theory of an ever-changing series of momentary flashes of consciousness defended in the Yogācāra school. It is true that consciousness is taken to be a little more permanent in the Vaiśeṣika school than in the Yogācāra school; but the situation does not materially change so long as it is supposed to appear and disappear like the changing things of the world.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, it is apparent that the psychological analysis of knowledge has latent in it the germ of a theory of consciousness which may be easily developed into the positions of either Hume or Bergson, or, again, that of the Buddhists. As Hume's destructive criticism of the categories of identity and causality may still be regarded as an important contribution to the philosophy of becoming, it will be useful to devote a little space to the consideration of his arguments

In respect of the self, Hume's insistence on the theory of the self as a series is but a special application of his general thesis that nothing exists except the flux of 'perceptions.' Like the Buddhist idealists, he will not admit the reality of any permanent principles anywhere in the universe, and as the self is

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<sup>26</sup> It may be observed that we do not dispute Thibaut's interpretation of the term semi-nihilistic by which, according to him, Śāṅkara only referred to the doctrine of difference of size constituting difference of substance. Our contention is that the term is more appropriately applied to the Vaiśeṣika theory of fleeting consciousness.

something within the universe, it must be as dynamic and changeful as the rest. "Some philosophers," Hume starts his discussion of personal identity with the remark, "imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our self; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity." Hume looks about for such a self and remarks that "if any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot therefore be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of the self is derived; and consequently there is no such idea."<sup>27</sup>

In appreciating the similarity of such a theory of self to that of the Buddhist idealists, we must remember that the ideas (*viññānas*) and the mental dispositions (*vāsanās*), according to them, are mutually conditioned by each other almost in the same way in which Hume's ideas and impressions are conditioned by each other. In the absence of any external stimulant, these mental elements have to be

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<sup>27</sup> *Treatise* I. IV. VI.

explained in a similar way by Hume as well as by the Buddhist idealists. The order in which they are derived from each other is described by Hume in a famous passage of his *Treatise*. "An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impression of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be impressions of reflection, because derived from it. These again are copied by the memory and imagination, and become ideas; which perhaps in their turn give rise to other impressions and ideas; so that the impressions of reflection are not only antecedent to their correspondent ideas, but posterior to those of sensation, and derived from them."<sup>28</sup> Thus Hume accepts the essentials of the Buddhist's conception of the relation between the *viññānas* and the *vāsanās* as mutually determining each other. It is, as the Buddhists put it, the relation of mutual causation like the relation of the seed (*bīja*) to the sprout (*aṅkura*).

It is true that there is here an apparent break in the similarity in so far as the Buddhists accept the doctrine of dependent origination (*Pratītyasamut-*

<sup>28</sup> *Treatise* I. 1. 2.

*pāda*), while Hume's chief contribution lay in a destructive criticism of the causal principles. But whatever might have been Hume's professed objective, his actual procedure, particularly in this case, implies clearly a causal determination between the impressions and the ideas, as is indicated by such terms as 'produces,' 'gives rise to,' etc.

It will be interesting, therefore, to analyse Śaṅkara's attack on the theory of a serial flow of impressions and ideas, as a preliminary to his criticism of the theory of the self as a series. And the most fundamental part of his criticism of the doctrine which assumes the reality of perpetual change or mere passing elements without a permanent basis consists in exposing the incompatibility of such a doctrine of purely evanescent events with the principles of causal determination that is supposed to exist between them. The advocates of perpetual change, he points out, admit that when the event that exists in the second moment makes its appearance what existed at the first moment has ceased to exist; but on this admission it is impossible to establish between the two events the relation of cause and effect.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the

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<sup>29</sup> *Na ca evam abhyupagaçchatā pūrvottarayoh kṣanayor-  
hetuphalabhāvaḥ śakyate sampaḍayitum*—S.B. II. 2. 20.

We need not show in detail how Śaṅkara analyses the meaning of a cause and drives the Buddhists to the self-contradictory position that a momentary existence must endure for

absurdity of predicating appearance as well as disappearance of an entity that is supposed to be perpetually changing, or momentary. the denial of a permanent cause leads inevitably to the position that entity springs from non-entity (*abhācāt bhāvotpattih*) And the most damaging implication of such a position is that anything may come out of anything because non-entity is everywhere the same; and in that case even a sprout may originate from the horn of a hare<sup>30</sup> Śaṅkara, therefore, insists on the contrary position that "only things of permanent nature which are always recognised as what they are, such as gold, etc. can be the causes of effects like golden ornaments."<sup>31</sup>

It would certainly be infinitely interesting to remember at this place that these remarks of Śaṅkara on the incompatibility of the doctrine of momentary existence with causal determination embody essentially Green's criticism of Hume's attempt to combine the theory of flux with causal connection. Unless the passing feelings "were taken to represent a thing, conceived as permanently existing under certain

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more than one moment in order that it may be said to produce the succeeding event. Origination and cessation, he argues, can be predicated of an event only in so far as it endures for a few moments, and this implies that the event or the thing is not constantly changing but is permanent at least for the three moments of origination, endurance and disappearance.

<sup>30</sup> *S. B.* II, 2. 26.

<sup>31</sup> *Loc. cit.*

relations and attributes—in other words, unless it were *identified* by thought—it would be no definite object, not this *flame* or this *heat*, at all.” And without such permanent objects, “there could be no such comparison of the relations in which two objects are now presented with those in which they have always been presented, as that which according to Hume determines us to regard them as cause and effect . . . It is only on supposition that a certain sensation of sight is not merely like a multitude of others, but represents the same object as that which I have previously known as flame, that I infer the sequence of heat and, when it does follow, regard it as an effect.”<sup>32</sup>

Thus, according to Śaṅkara as well as Green, causal connection can exist only between things that are recognisable at different times, and not between the perishing existences, such as the ideas and impressions are supposed to be by Hume and his Indian predecessors, the Buddhists. This leads to the connected problem of identity. And here, again, Hume’s explanation of identity is but a wonderful reproduction of the Buddhist’s account of it. Recognition, according to the Buddhists, can be accounted for by

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<sup>32</sup> *Works*, I, p. 256.

The latter part of Green’s remarks is almost a literal translation of Śaṅkara’s observation: *Sthirasvabhāvamāṃ eva svarūḍīnām pratyabhijñāyamānānām rucakādi-kāryakāraṇa-bhāradarśanāt*—*S B*, loc. cit.

similarity.<sup>33</sup> Though, in fact, there is nothing permanent, yet two resembling nails or hairs are mistaken for the same identical nail or hair on account of their similarity. The flames of the fire, to take another oft-quoted example, are constantly changing, yet, the similarity of the flames at successive moments of time leads to the mistaken notion of one identical flame. How far this explanation of apparent identity is an anticipation of Hume's famous discussion on the subject does not require much comment. "Nothing is more apt to make us mistake one idea for another," to quote one of his characteristic sentences, "than any relation between them, which associates them together in the imagination, and makes it pass with facility from one to the other. Of all relations, that of resemblance is in this respect the most efficacious; and that because it not only causes an association of ideas, but also of dispositions, and makes us conceive the one idea of an act or operation of the mind, similar to that by which we conceive the other."<sup>34</sup> For Hume, identity is a fiction of imagination, and "resemblance is the cause of the confusion and mistake" and this resemblance "makes us substitute the notion of identity, instead of that of related objects."

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<sup>33</sup> *Sāṃśyāt etat saṃpatsyate—S. B. II, 2. 25, Sāṃśyāt pratyabhijñānam, kṛttotthita-keśanakhādiṣu iva—Com. on the Brh. Up. IV. 3. 7.*

<sup>34</sup> *Treatise I. IV. II.*



Thus, according to the Buddhists as well as Hume, the recognition of an identical object is due to the resemblance existing between different ideas or impressions. Śaṅkara's objection to such an explanation is that it hardly accounts for the distinction we make in ordinary life between the judgments of identity and those of similarity. In recognising a thing as an identical object, we do not think that the present object is similar to a former object only.<sup>29</sup> This distinction between identity and similarity, Śaṅkara remarks, goes against the doctrine that recognition is due to similarity (*sādrśyāt pratyabhijñānam*); the example of nail and hair is not of much avail either, because the objects, such as the nails and hairs, are not momentary, and because here there is a unity in the species.<sup>30</sup> That is, the Buddhists have illustrated their doctrine, not from perishing existences, but from permanent things, and what is true of the latter cannot be extended to the former. And moreover, an object is recognised as being one of a species, there is a generic unity here; whereas in the case of a judgment of similarity we do not recognise

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<sup>29</sup> *Na ca ayam sādṛśyāt saṅgyavahārah, yuktaḥ, tadbhāvāvagamāt tatsādṛśabhāvanavagamāt ca*—S.B. II, 2, 25.

<sup>30</sup> *Kṣaṇikatvasyāsiddhatvāt jātyekatvāt ca*—Com on the Bṛh. Up. loc. cit.

the individual identity of the things that are apprehended as similar.<sup>37</sup>

It is true, Śaṅkara admits, that in the case of external things, we may be sometimes in doubt whether the object before us is identical with, or only similar to, what was perceived before; but the absurdity of deriving identity from similarity becomes obvious in the case of the self that judges. Here there is not even the doubt whether the self is identical or similar.<sup>38</sup> And this clearly disproves the Buddhistic doctrine. A judgment of similarity, he continues, "is based on two things," and consequently it implies "a subject who is able to grasp the two similar things;" hence those who advocate the doctrine of universal flux and yet assert that recognition is founded on similarity, talk nonsense only. If, on the other hand, it be admitted that "there is one mind apprehending the similarity of two successive momentary existences, he would thereby admit that one entity endures for two moments and thus contradict his doctrine of universal momentariness." Thus, the theory that recognition is based upon similarity cannot be made consistent

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<sup>37</sup> Compare Green's remark that Hume had practically assumed the possibility of identity when he admitted that we recognise each flame as 'one species of object,' and it is clear that the object recognised is by no means the feeling as a perishing existence. *Ibid.* p. 264.

<sup>38</sup> S. B. II. 2. 25.

with the theory of pure becoming; and the main reason, for Śaṅkara, is that the judgment of similarity, such as 'this is similar to that,' cannot be possible "in the absence of one subject who would grasp the two resembling things."<sup>39</sup> How far, here, again, Śaṅkara anticipates Green's contention against Hume may be seen from the latter's remark that though the impressions may occur in a perpetual flux of succession, 'yet, just so far as they are qualified by likeness or unlikeness to each other, they must be taken out of that succession by something which is not itself in it, but is individually present to every moment of it.'<sup>40</sup> So the consciousness of resemblance, according to Green, implies "a reference to that which is not itself any single impression, but is permanent throughout the impressions."

Śaṅkara, therefore, would certainly agree with Green and remark with the latter that the identity of objects must be "an unavoidable crux" for any theory that substitutes a pure succession of elements for the permanent principles of the world of experience. The identity of the self, especially, is regarded by Śaṅkara and Green as a fundamental presupposition of all experience including the knowledge of succession. It is one of their chief missions

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<sup>39</sup> *Śaḍśayordvayorvastuṃ or grahīturekasya abhāvāt—loc. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 176.

to emphasise, against the supporters of pure becoming the function of an identical synthetic principle that alone explains perception as well as our knowledge of succession. Even perception, as we have seen above <sup>41</sup> implies a conscious synthetic principle that was wrongly identified by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers with an unconscious soul-substance. And in Buddhism, we are confronted with the opposite error of pure substance-less succession that cannot account for even that element of aggregation (*saṅghāta*) that is yet presupposed by the Buddhist thinkers. Śāṅkara, therefore, rightly devotes a considerable space to the conditions of an aggregate being there. On the Buddhist principle, he urges, it is inexplicable, how the aggregate of the elements or of the five *skandhas* may be possible, inasmuch as the Buddhists do not admit any permanent conscious principle.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Green urges, over against Hume's description of the self as a bundle or collection of impressions that are in a perpetual flux, that the very term 'collection of ideas' is an absurdity, for, how can a perpetual flux be collected?

The point, however, at which the doctrine of universal becoming appears to break down completely is the difficulty of reconciling it with the possibility of

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<sup>41</sup> *Supra*, p. 163.

<sup>42</sup> *Supra*, p. 169.

memory; and memory has, therefore, provided the real bone of contention to the Indian as well as the Western thinkers of the opposite school. The absurdity of the doctrine of universal 'becoming,' Śaṅkara thinks, is clearly exposed when it is extended to the perceiving self; because memory presupposes an identical person enduring throughout from the time of perception to the moment of remembrance. "What one man has experienced is not remembered by another man." And even the nihilist has to admit that "there is one thinking subject only to which the original perception as well as the remembrance belongs;" and this fact, therefore, is as sure as that "fire is hot and gives light."

Hume, as is well known, did not face the difficulty squarely and contented himself with assuming that the 'perceptions' were unified in imagination. It is immaterial whether that in which the 'perceptions' are unified be called a self or imagination; in either case, the problem of reconciling the doctrine of universal flux with the possibility of the 'perceptions' being unified is not solved. If, on the other hand, it is assumed that they are unified in imagination, then this imagination itself becomes a permanent self which Hume could not discover among the passing mental states. This shortcoming in Hume's analysis of experience is removed by his followers, particularly by William James. In fact, W. James may very aptly

be called a genuine descendant of the Buddhists, and his theory of self combines in an admirably accurate manner all that is characteristic of the Buddhist theory. His conception of the self as a stream of consciousness, his insistence that the passing thoughts are themselves the thinkers, his doctrine that memory does not require for its explanation the hypothesis of a permanent self, his belief that identity can be well explained by the similarity existing between one phenomenon and another,—these are some of the well-known contentions that would easily be considered as genuinely Buddhistic. It would, therefore, be interesting to refer at this place to some of the outstanding features of his account of the self.

The fact of personal identity is discussed by W. James in his monumental work,<sup>43</sup> in a way that may be taken to be the last word on the subject from the standpoint of an empirical philosophy. He, therefore, rightly acknowledges his debt to Hume and Herbart in so far as they “describe the self as an aggregate of which each part, as to its *being*, is a separate fact.” His mission then is not to question what they had discovered in this respect but to develop their doctrine further with reference to “certain more subtle aspects” of the subjects that were neglected by his predecessors. The consciousness of personal sameness, he thinks,

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<sup>43</sup> *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, Ch. X.

cannot be denied; as a subjective phenomenon, it is essential to all thinking. But this *feeling* of sameness, it is contended, does not prove that personal identity exists as a fact, as, for instance, when it is said that I am the same self that I was yesterday. Thought is constantly changing, it is a stream of subjective consciousness, yet, there is "resemblance among the parts of a continuum of feelings (especially bodily feelings) experienced along with things widely different in all other regards." This resemblance 'constitutes the real and the verifiable 'personal identity' which we feel.' It is true that the thoughts do not fly about loose, but are owned. But this too does not need the hypothesis of an identical self or the soul of metaphysics. Because it can be well explained by the present Thought which, though different from the past Thoughts, has merely inherited their 'title' and thus stood as their legal representative now. "We can imagine a long succession of herdsmen coming rapidly into possession of the same cattle by transmission of an original title by bequest." In a similar way, "Each pulse of cognitive consciousness, each Thought, dies away and is replaced by another. The other, among the things it knows, knows its own predecessor, and finding it 'warm' greets . . . it, saying: 'Thou art mine, and part of the same self with me.' Each later Thought, knowing and including thus the Thought which went before, is the final

receptacle of all that they contain and own. Each Thought is thus born an owner, and dies owned, transmitting whatever it realised as its Self to its own later proprietor."<sup>44</sup> James then refers to Kant's analogy of the elastic balls and concludes: "Who owns the last self owns the self before the last, for what possesses the possessor possesses the possessed."

There is, therefore, no need, according to such a doctrine, of a permanent soul for explaining either the fact of ownership or the feeling of personal identity. "The sense of personal identity, then, is exactly like any one of our other perceptions of sameness among phenomena. It is a conclusion grounded either on the resemblance in a fundamental respect, or on the continuity before the mind, of the phenomena compared."

How far W. James's analysis of personal identity and his explanation of appropriation by a later Thought of the contents of the former Thoughts are but an admirable summary of the Buddhistic position may be seen from Vasubandhu's discussion on the nature of the self and on the fact of recognition. In opposition to the doctrine of the *pudgala* accepted by the Vātsīputrīyas, Vasubandhu seeks to reconcile the facts of memory and recognition with the position which denies a permanent principle over and above

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<sup>44</sup> *Loc. cit.* p. 339.



the series of passing events or the stream of thought. In the absence of a permanent principle, it is urged by the Vātsīputrīyas, "things experienced by Devadatta's consciousness would be remembered by the consciousness of Yajñadatta."<sup>45</sup> This objection, it may be noted here, arises inevitably from the refusal to accept any permanent principle over and above the flux of what are generally described as the states of consciousness. There is no agent, it is contended by Vasubandhu, called the soul, besides "an unbroken continuity of momentary forces." Even consciousness is a conventional name for a chain of conscious moments, much as the light of a lamp is a common metaphorical designation for an uninterrupted production of a series of flashing flames.<sup>46</sup> All elements which partake in the process of life are characterised by a constant change, they constitute a stream in which the next moment is necessarily different from the preceding one. In the continuous stream of ideas, there is a fixed order of succession. There is a certain affinity between ideas "in virtue of which there are ideas somehow similar to others and having the power of evoking them." As, for instance, when the idea

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<sup>45</sup> These quotations are taken from Dr. Th. Stcherbatsky's translation, under the title 'The Soul Theory of the Buddhists,' of the appendix to the 8th chapter of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*.

<sup>46</sup> p. 938.

of a woman is associated with the idea of an impure body or the idea of her husband, son, etc., and if, later on, in the changing stream of thought, the same idea of a woman reappears, it has the power of evoking those ideas of impure body, or of a husband, son, etc. because they are associated with it, but it has not the power of evoking other ideas. The conclusion, we arrive at, is, therefore, this: Just as milk and water are conventional names (for a set of independent elements) for some colour, smell, taste, and touch, taken together, so is the designation 'individual' but a common name for the different elements, which it is composed of.

The fact of memory and recognition, according to Vasubandhu, does not militate against such a theory of serial self, nor does the latter, when properly understood, lead to the absurd position that what one has experienced should be remembered by another. This would be possible only if there had not been a causal relation between the different members of a series. The experiences of Devadattā are not remembered by Yajñadatta, because "they are not mutually related as cause and effect, as is the case between moments belonging to the same stream of thought." A man who perceived an object can remember it, but what it means is this that "a consciousness which perceived an object formerly is gradually producing a consciousness which remembers it now." Sō, for example, when we say

“Caitra remembers,” what it really means is that in the current of phenomena which is designated by the name Caitra a recollection appears.<sup>47</sup> It is no more. Similarly, when we say “the memory of Caitra,” the proprietor is simply the cause and the property will simply be its effect.

Such a position, supported and described by the Buddhists as well as the modern thinkers, such as W. James, has at least the merit of presenting the doctrine of self, as best as the facts would allow, in conformity with the doctrine of universal becoming. The self, according to it, is not something like an abiding soul-substance underlying the changing states of consciousness; it is rather a stream or series of elements that may either be called ‘thoughts’ after W. James or ‘*vijñānas*’ after the Buddhist idealists. The unity of personality which is an undoubted fact is explained here, not by reference to a hypothetical entity lying beyond the stream,—but by a sort of ‘affinity’ or causal influence which a previous member of the series exercises upon a succeeding member, so that a given ‘thought’ can belong to one stream as distinct from another. It is this causal affinity that explains the fact that each of us has a particular mental stream that may run parallel to other mental streams but can never be identical with the latter. In

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<sup>47</sup> p. 353.

other words, the unity of personality is merely the unity of a series, and not that of a soul-substance. Even the facts of memory, and recognition are not supposed to need the hypothesis of an identical self provided we understand the trick by which the contents of one 'thought' are transmitted to another. This transmission takes place either because the 'thoughts' that belong to one stream have a 'warmth and intimacy' for each member of that series, or because, as the Buddhists put it, each idea gives rise to another through a sort of affinity that is sometimes likened to the transmission of the 'red colour from one cotton canvas to another or the transference of the flavour from one flower to another. Hence, though I am changing incessantly, from moment to moment, from childhood to old age, and from one life to another, yet, the series of my mental states remains unbroken and undiverted, and my present 'thought' remembers only what was perceived by a member of the same series to which it itself belongs.

It is easy to see that such an explanation of memory, in spite of the improvements which W. James professes to have made upon Hume's account, is subject to the same critical observations which Śaṅkara has brought to bear upon the Buddhistic theory of pure becoming. So far as identity is said to be grounded on similarity, Śaṅkara, as we have seen above, would condemn such an assertion as a mere

nonsense, because there can be no consciousness of similarity in the absence of an unchanging subject that grasps the two similar things. So even if it be granted that our knowledge of the similarity existing between two things does not presuppose any judgment of identity in regard to any of those things, such a knowledge does at least imply the identity of the subject that is aware of the similarity. The only reply that might be made by James, if he had known the Indian controversy, would be that in the judgment of similarity, the judging 'thought' is entirely different from (*pratyañāntaram eva*) all other 'thoughts' and that the judgment is not conditioned by the apprehension or awareness of two different things (*na pūrvot-tarakṣaṇadvayagrahaṇanimittam*). But even then the difficulty does not disappear; because if there had not been two things that are compared and are known to be similar, we should, as Śaṅkara rightly remarks, speak of 'similarity' only, and not of 'this' similar to 'that.' In other words, the awareness of similarity is not as simple as the awareness, say, of a colour or sound. Even if it be conceded that when I perceive the red colour what really happens is that my present 'thought' grasps a particular sensation which is compresent with it, such an analysis would be clearly inadequate in the case of my knowledge of similarity, inasmuch as similarity implies two things, a 'this' and a 'that' both of which must be grasped in one

act of attention. In accepting the Humian explanation of identity, James does not seem to have been disturbed in the least by the damaging observations made by the critics of Hume, such as Green, on the attempt to derive identity from resemblance. And what appears to be more strange is the welcome that has been accorded to Hume's explanation of identity by thinkers who are expected to be better informed and more careful than James. Mr. B. Russell, for instance, describes the self as the causal nexus among a series of events, and has then naturally to confront the problem of identity and that of recognition. Nothing disturbed by the previous history of the problem, he remarks that "when we recognise something, it was not in fact the very same thing, but only something similar, that we experienced on a former occasion. A person's face is always changing, and is not exactly the same on any two occasions. Common-sense treats it as one face with varying expressions, but the varying expressions actually exist, each at its proper time, while the one face is merely a logical construction."<sup>48</sup> Such a passage might easily be taken as an extract from the work of a Buddhist; and both James and Russell could infinitely strengthen their position, if they had known the wonderfully

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<sup>48</sup> *The Analysis of Mind*, p. 171.

subtle dialectics of the Buddhists in defence of an identical position.<sup>49</sup>

These attempts to reconcile recognition and memory with the doctrine of universal becoming may perhaps create more admiration than conviction. The difficulty is really concealed, and not solved, under the notion of transmission which is assumed by James as well as the Buddhists as a fact. The truth is that even transmission could not be possible in a world of perpetual change, much less could the contents of one idea be transmitted to another without an unchanging background. The analogy of the balls or of the canvas would not even carry any sense to us if we had not assumed a permanent unchanging environment in which the balls are imagined to move. If we add to this the argument that even the consciousness of a series would be impossible if consciousness itself had been a member of the series,—an argument which is rightly emphasised by Śaṅkara and Kant,—the irreconcilability of recognition and memory with the concept of a changing self would be easily realised.

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<sup>49</sup> "Identity, eternality, etc.," it is urged, for instance, by Śāntaraksita, "are purely imaginary, not real" *Ekadvaitatādisca kalpito na tu tātva kah—Tattva-Saṅgraha*, G.O.S., p. 262. And Kamalaśīla clears up this position by adding that if a Buddhist mentions the term identity, he does it only in view of common misconceptions (*bhrāntipratipattianurodhena*).

Thus however does not mean a total denial of the applicability of the concept of evolution to the human mind. Even an elementary fact of perception, as we have seen above, implies change in the mind. Similarly, the growth of mind from one stage to another may be admitted. But it will be a fatal confusion to infer from the evolution or growth of mind that there is change in consciousness as well. Changes in consciousness, it has been one of Green's repeated contentions, cannot account for the consciousness of change. We might introduce a little modification into Green's expression and insist that changes in mind cannot explain the consciousness of mental changes. In other words, the term 'mind' is highly ambiguous; it may either refer to the changing principle which Green calls sensibility, or, again, it may mean the unchanging principle which is called consciousness. No one of them, he rightly urges, can be reduced to the other. In that case, we must give up the slovenly fashion of using the same term for these irreducible principles indifferently. This ambiguity has been responsible for a large number of confusions in psychology as well as in epistemology, and we shall have to consider them in due course. What has to be remembered in the present context is that nothing that changes is consciousness, yet mind grows; and it is in a satisfactory reconciliation of these two aspects that the strength of a philosophical position consists.



From the similarities we have emphasised between James's explanation of memory and that of Vasubandhu, it may be seen that the improvements, which the former claims to have made upon Hume, had in fact been made long before by the Buddhists. The trick of transmission and the theory of functional identity persisting through substantial diversity have been a more or less permanent feature of Buddhism, because they alone can offer a plausible explanation of recognition and memory in conformity with the theory of universal flux, and the Buddhists were too acute not to utilize them fully. The whole position is put in a very brief and clear way by Śāntarakṣita when he remarks that "even things that are diverse by reason of the diversity of their powers become the basis of an effect conceived as *one*."<sup>50</sup> Consequently, it is a mistake to infer an identical percipient agent from the fact of recollection; it is a false assumption (*mīthyā-rīkalpa*).

The theory of functional identity, it is evident, is based entirely upon analogies derived from the world of objects, as is apparent from the instances used by Śāntarakṣita, Kant or James. It is true that in certain matters, analogies are both useful and inevitable even in philosophical thinking. But, then, they must be able to explain the important point in a

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<sup>50</sup> *Tattva-Saṅgraha*, G. O. S., p. 85.

discussion without assuming beforehand what needs explanation. The very first thing that must be borne in mind in discussing memory or recollection is that all objects have a meaning only in so far as they are presented to consciousness, and that consciousness cannot be cut up into separate bits. So much we learn even from our psychologists. "The object of thought," it is said by Prof. G. F. Stout, "is whatever the mind means or intends to refer to. To perceive or think at all is to perceive or think of something, and this something, just because it is perceived or thought of, is an object presented to consciousness."<sup>51</sup> But, it is to be remembered at the same time that "the unity of consciousness is radically different in its nature from any unity which can belong to a material thing. Every material thing is extended in space and therefore consists of parts spatially external to each other and spatially separable from each other. It is divisible into component portions, each of which exists independently as a material thing or parcel of matter in the same way as the whole which is constituted by their union. The cup, for instance, which I hold in my hand is apprehended by me as one thing; but the separate subsistence of its parts as distinct bodies is forcibly brought home to me, if it falls on the floor and is broken in fragments. On the contrary, the unity

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<sup>51</sup> *Manual of Psychology, Fourth Edition*, p. 99.

and distinctness of an individual consciousness is not thus composed of parts, each possessing independently a separable unity and distinctness of the same kind. It cannot be broken into fragmentary thoughts, feelings, and volitions, or fragments of thought, feeling and volition, each persisting like the pieces of the cup, when I have ceased to think, feel and will. A material thing is composed of material things; but a conscious self is not composed of conscious selves.”<sup>52</sup>

We have quoted here rather extensively from a competent modern psychologist in view of the confusions into which many an able thinker has fallen in giving a true description of consciousness. The whole description may be summarised in the language of Śaṅkara who says that “ ‘ The known ’ means whatever is the object of special knowledge; and as all such objects can be known somewhere, to some extent and by someone and so forth, the whole world is meant by the term ‘ the known. ’ ”<sup>53</sup> But the self for which all objects have a meaning “is not in itself divided; it only appears divided owing to its limiting adjuncts, such as the mind and so on, just as the ether appears divided by its connexion with jars and the like.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>53</sup> *Com. on the Kenopanishad* Part I. 3.

<sup>54</sup> *S. B.* II. 3. 17.

We may now easily detect the fallacy in the theory of functional identity. A series of 'ideas' has no meaning apart from the assumption of a plurality of ideas forming the series; a serial unity, that is, implies a plurality of units each of which occupies a distinct moment of time. In this sense they are fragmentary and at least mentally separable from each other; and so far the unity of the series is like the unity of the material things. But this must be different from the unity of consciousness or the self which apprehends them as forming a series. If the self also had changed corresponding to the change in the ideas, there would not be any consciousness of the series as a unity. The serial unity, therefore, is entirely different from, and points to, the conscious principle *within* which there is no plurality. And, consequently, all analogies taken from the world of objects where plurality and complexity are undeniable facts must be inapplicable to the unity of consciousness.

In the theory of functional identity, we thus come once more upon the fallacy of confusing *vṛtti* with *bodha* which was found to vitiate the psychological analysis of perception. The modifications of sensibility, as Green puts it, are irreducible to the conscious principle and *vice versa*, though both are necessary for a perceptual act. The mental changes, in other words, are not changes *within* consciousness, and mental growth or the evolution of mind is not an

evolution of the conscious principle. To put it in the language of Kant himself, the empirical apperception is not the transcendental apperception; the former is a "flux of inner phenomena," and here "there can be no unchanging or permanent self." The latter, on the contrary, is "pure, original, unchangeable consciousness." Apart from the latter which is the "unity of consciousness which is prior to all data of perception," "no unity and connection of objects is possible." To put the whole thing once more in the words of Śaṅkara, the conscious principle is the pre-supposition (*grāhikā*) of the fragmentary and changing knowledge-events.

The only remark that must be added here is that evolution has no meaning if the different stages of the universe do not form a series each occupying a definite place in time. In "pure duration" there can be no evolution if there is within it no 'before' and no 'after.' It follows from this that we cannot even imagine how there could be a universal evolution if the man who seeks to know it had been himself a member of the evolving universe. Evolution is change, at the least; and change must be in time which implies succession, a 'before' and an 'after.' In imagining the past history of the world, we have necessarily to transfer ourselves backward, as in imagining the future of the world we must similarly transfer ourselves forward, as looking at the changing events. And

as imagination is founded on actual perception, whatever is true of the latter must be true of the former; the conditions of the perception of change must apply equally to the imagination of change. But the perception of change and succession implies, as we have seen, a conscious principle which is not itself in succession. When, therefore, we imagine the past or the future of the world, such an unchanging principle must be postulated to account for our knowledge of the evolving world. This, of course, does not mean that I was never born, or that I can never die. But the conclusion that seems to follow irresistibly from these considerations is that man, in so far as he knows history, cannot be entirely historical; the knowledge of a changing universe, in other words, cannot be possible for a being that is nothing more than a part of the changing universe. "Two ideas which occupy different moments of time and pass away as soon as they have become objects of consciousness," as put by Śaṅkara, "cannot apprehend or be apprehended by each other."<sup>55</sup> Even the perception of a series implies the reality of "a continuous principle equally connected with the past, the present, and the future, or an absolutely unchangeable self."<sup>56</sup> And the concept of universal evolution is but the perceived change applied on a cosmic scale.

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<sup>55</sup> S B. II, 2. 28.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 2. 31.

It has been, therefore, rightly remarked that "a living being that knows seems to belong to an order quite different in kind from that of one that merely lives without knowing."<sup>57</sup> The knowledge of change which we all possess shows at the same time that we are possessors of eternity. "The relations of events to each other as in time," as Green puts it almost borrowing his language from Śaṅkara, "implies their equal presence to a subject which is not in time."<sup>58</sup>

In fact the analysis of our knowledge of change which is offered by Kant and Green is essentially an illuminating commentary to Śaṅkara's theory of perception. The advaita position in respect of this problem is beautifully summarised by Sureśvara, one of Śaṅkara's immediate successors. The self, he says, is the non-successional seer (*akramadṛk*) of the passing modes of mind (*Dhī* or *Buddhī*); it is the latter which changes with the different acts of knowledge, and not the self which sees the past, the present, and the future simultaneously. If the witnessing self had changed, there would arise no knowledge of the thousand changing modes of the mind. The self, therefore, for Sureśvara, is unchanging (*avikriya*); above the three temporal distinctions (*nīstrikāla*), and eternal (*kūtaśtha*).<sup>59</sup> Apart from Green's repeated

<sup>57</sup> Haldane, *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 151.

<sup>58</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* II, 69-77.

warnings against the confusion of "feeling" with "consciousness," the following passage admirably brings out the functions of sensibility and the conscious subject respectively in our knowledge of time:—"Sensibility is the condition of existence in time, of there being events related to each other as past, present, and future. Ask yourself what meaning the terms 'now' and 'then' have except as derived from a relation between a perpetually vanishing consciousness and one that is permanent, and you find they have none. When we say that there was time or there were events in time before man began to exist, we mean that there were events, of which each was thus related to another as 'now' and 'then.' But all these expressions about 'events' and 'happening' and 'taking place' imply or derive their meaning from a sensibility, of which the perpetually vanishing modes are held together by a subject equally present to, and distinguishing itself from, all of them."<sup>60</sup> We need not discuss here Green's theory of an eternal sensibility, but what will be very important for our further analysis of what we have called the foundational consciousness is the distinction, he insists on, between the two conditions of our knowledge of change.

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<sup>60</sup> *Works* II, p. 79,



## CONSCIOUSNESS AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

The discussions on the conditions of knowledge undertaken in the last two chapters should have cleared up some of the difficulties in the way of a correct theory of self. The self, we have seen, is of the nature of foundational knowledge or foundational consciousness, though it is generally mixed up with things other than itself, such as, mental modes or modifications of sensibility. In fact, this association of the real self with the not-self is so intimate and indissoluble that large portions of advaita literature are devoted to arguments designed to prove that the conscious principle is *not* any of the pseudo-selves with which it is generally confused. Even the modifications of mind,—that are called here '*antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*'s or '*buddhi-vṛtti*'s—are not the real self; on the contrary, they are as much objects for a subject as the physical things, even they are illumined by the light of the self. In other words, the self is the presupposition of all objects including the physical as well as the mental events and things. It is, to put it in the language of Kant, the transcendental condition of "Nature." The mistake of the substantialists as well as the actualists, to borrow James's language, is identical in

so far as both take the self to be something other than the foundational consciousness, and this mistake is nothing but a confusion of consciousness to which all objects and events are presented with what undergoes modifications and change. Even the 'ideas' of the Yogācāra school which form a series are nothing but fragmentary mental modifications that are mistaken to be momentary flashes of consciousness on account of the conscious principle lying beyond, and illumining, them.

As a substantial help to the understanding of the nature of foundational consciousness, we must now turn to certain unquestionable facts of our daily life that are not ordinarily emphasised in modern philosophy. The perplexities which have grown round the problem of personal identity,—a problem which even Bradley thinks to be one that can be best solved by not asking questions about it—are, we think, due to the same difficulty of avoiding the confusion of consciousness with mental modifications. Bradley is surely right in thinking that the question of personal identity "is sheer nonsense until we have got some clear idea as to what the self is to stand for."<sup>1</sup> He is further right in taking it as "evident that, for personal identity, some continuity is requisite." But he is equally wrong in thinking that continuity during sleep is doubtful and so it cannot be used to prove identity.

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<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 73.

Here, as we shall see presently, Bradley seems to draw as hasty a conclusion as was drawn by Kaṇāda and Rāmānuja.

The breaks in ‘*psychical* continuity’ which Bradley thinks to be irreconcilable with an identical self, as is too well known to require any elaborate proof, were a source of infinite trouble to Locke whose contradictions on this subject should have made the subsequent philosophers pause to think whether the generally accepted notion of self-consciousness were not ambiguous. According to Locke, it might well be the privilege of the Infinite Author that he never slumbers or sleeps; but so far as the finite minds were concerned he could never accept the Cartesian notion of a thinking substance which thinks always. Those at least “who do at any time sleep without dreaming,” he thinks, “can never be convinced that their thoughts are sometimes for four hours busy without their knowing of it.”<sup>2</sup> He is, therefore, quite sure that the soul in a sleeping man has neither pleasure nor pain any more than the bed or earth he lies on. Locke does not feel disturbed till he raises the question “whether, if the same substance, which thinks, be changed, it can be the same person; or, remaining the same, it can be different persons?”<sup>3</sup> It is this question which forces

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<sup>2</sup> *Essay*, Bk. II. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. III. Ch. 27, Sec. 12.

him for the first time to give up his anti-Cartesian belief, and admit that 'consciousness makes the same person.' He then proceeds to acknowledge that "if the same Socrates waking and sleeping do not partake of the same-consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping is not the same person."

This admission and contradiction in Locke have not succeeded in directing the attention of the subsequent thinkers to a more careful study of the states of dream and dreamless sleep. Even James, one of the distinguished psychologists of our time, confesses that "we can give no rigorous answer to this question."<sup>4</sup> The problem of breach in consciousness, he says, can be easily solved *a priori*, if we had accepted the Cartesian theory of soul, but such a course is not open to one who has "no doctrine about the soul or its essence," and, consequently, he would rather "admit that the mind, as well as the body, may go to sleep." James is apparently unaware of the contradictions of Locke and so accepts Locke's defence of his position as spirited. It is, however, admitted that the facts of hysteria and hypnotism prove conclusively that "we must never take a person's testimony, however sincere, that he has felt nothing, as proof positive that no feeling has been there."<sup>5</sup> But this admission remains as a passing observation which does not affect seriously

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<sup>4</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, I, p. 200.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

his views on the problem of self-consciousness. It is a pregnant admission, to borrow a well-known remark of Green on Locke's admission of an identical consciousness, but it brings nothing to the birth in James. He would cling to the theory of self as "a generic unity," rather than accept a "sort of metaphysical or absolute Unity in which all differences are overwhelmed."<sup>6</sup> His Peter and Paul wake up in the morning and recollect their respective past experiences, not because each is an identical consciousness, but because the past experiences of each come to him with a warmth and intimacy due to his body and the central adjustments which "*are the real nucleus of our personal identity.*"<sup>7</sup>

His rejection of the metaphysical Unity would not be so easy if he had stopped to consider what was implied in the knowledge of "the body and the central adjustments." Even if it be supposed that the body is out there, it will not explain how it comes to be an *object of my knowledge*; how, in other words, the perishing 'thoughts' can be the vehicle of the knowledge of a body which persists as an identical object through different moments of time. If he had raised this problem of knowledge, as it was raised by Hume upon whose theory of self he sought to improve, he

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

would easily see that the "transcendentalist school" could not simply be dismissed as one "in which psychology at least has naught to learn."<sup>8</sup> Whatever may have been the linguistic ambiguity of that school, the clearest lesson it teaches is that the perception of the "body" presupposes an identical consciousness as the ultimate basis of recognition involved in all perceptions. Mere perishing pulses of thought cannot explain recollection and knowledge of identical things. James admits that "however complex the object may be, the thought of it is one undivided state of consciousness"<sup>9</sup> That which knows the "empirical aggregate of things," he says, "cannot itself be an aggregate."<sup>10</sup> But he never considers seriously how the perishing thoughts can explain the possibility of rising above the empirical aggregate and become an undivided unity.

Similarly, he does no justice whatsoever to Kant, Green, and Caird, when he reads into their theories the distinction between an *agent* and the *activity* which belongs to it. His criticism of the theory of soul-substance would be heartily endorsed by those whom he criticises, and a reputed scholar like James should have known that the transcendental self is not a transcendent spiritual substance, but an immanent

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400.

principle which is ever present in all our thoughts and feelings; it is as immanent as the 'thoughts' by which he seeks to replace it. Apart from this transcendental self, the present passing 'Thought' could not be a "principle by which the Many is simultaneously known."<sup>11</sup> The "mystery of synthesis" cannot be explained either by a transcendent principle or by a passing 'Thought'; it can be explained only by an identical principle which, though immanent, yet does not pass away with the passing pulses of thought. It must be, in other words, non-successional (*akramadr̥k*), as Suresvara puts it, and yet undeniably present in all our fragmentary knowledge and experience.

All this has been explained with sufficient force and clearness. We have seen, for instance, that the foundational consciousness is the presupposition of all distinctions and differences we ordinarily make between the knowing agent and the property of knowledge. Consciousness is not an attribute *of* the self, it is not something that is possessed *by* the self in the same way in which the cow is possessed by Caitra. It *is* the self. In fact, James deliberately shuts his eyes and then complains that he cannot see. He starts on his criticism of the transcendental theory with the explicit statement that he need do "no more than decide what

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

to think of the transcendental Ego *if it be* an agent. <sup>12</sup> And it is no wonder that he finds in Kant's transcendentalism nothing more than Substantialism grown shame-faced. It is true that Kant has made himself partly liable to this charge by his unguarded language. But his theory of self would be better understood if the critics had given more attention to his explanation of the dialectic illusion involved in rational psychology. Kant has been seriously misunderstood, and it will take us long afield to attempt a full exposition of his theory of self and his doctrine of categories. So far as the latter is concerned, we have partly done it elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> So far as his theory of self is concerned, none will be in a position to appreciate him who ignores his remark that the "identity of the subject in all the determinations of which I can be conscious is not the same thing as a perception in which the self is presented as an object which can be recognized as self-identical."<sup>14</sup> The fallacy of rational psychology consists in this that "The unity of consciousness, which is the supreme condition of the categories, is simply confused with a perception of the subject as object, and hence we suppose that we may apply to the subject the

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>13</sup> *Viz.*, *Self, Thought and Reality*, Chapters VI—IX; and Kant's *Analysis of Scientific Method*, an article in *Review of Philosophy and Religion*, Vol. VI. No. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Watson's *Selections*, p. 150.



category of substance''<sup>15</sup> This is a serious mistake "The subject no doubt thinks the categories, but that is no reason for saying that it can have a conception of itself as an object of the categories. It cannot think the categories without presupposing its own self-consciousness, and therefore self-consciousness cannot be brought under the categories."

The difficulty in putting aright the status of the self in the language of ordinary speech and thought arises from the fact that "the specific nature of our understanding consists in thinking everything discursively, that is, representing it by concepts, and so by mere predicates, to which therefore the absolute subject must always be wanting."<sup>16</sup> But we must always remember that self-consciousness "is itself the ground of the possibility of the Categories," and, therefore, self-consciousness in general is the representation of that which is the condition of all unity, and yet itself unconditioned."<sup>17</sup>

Kant's theory of self is essentially the corner-stone of the doctrine of Green who remarks that "the really prolific element" in Kant's theory of knowledge is the view of the noumenon "which he calls the ego, as the source of the categories."<sup>18</sup> He accepts the view that

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>16</sup> Kant's *Prolegomena*, by Mahaffy and Bernard, p. 97

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>18</sup> *Works* III, p. 127.

"the existence of a knowable nature implies that of a principle of union which is not itself part of the knowable nature, not one or any number of the relations which constitute it; an unconditioned, in relation to which alone the mutual conditioning of phenomena is possible; a consciousness of laws of nature, or rather a principle of consciousness which, in relation to sensibility, yields laws of nature, which is not itself subject to those laws of nature."<sup>19</sup> This consciousness "is one which, on however limited a scale, we ourselves exercise in the acquisition of experience, and exercise only by means of such a consciousness."<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Caird, in spite of his quarrels with Kant, has no doubt in his mind that self-consciousness is an undeniable fact; it is "our very highest type of knowledge," and to reject it is "as if one should say that it is impossible to see the sun because we cannot throw the rays of a candle upon it. But as it is the light which reveals both itself and the darkness, so it is self-consciousness through which we know both itself and all other objects."<sup>21</sup>

In view of these unambiguous statements of Kant, Green and Caird, it would be surely unwarranted in the highest degree to condemn the transcendental Ego as "simply *nothing* : as ineffectual and windy an

<sup>19</sup> *Works* II, p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> *Hegel*, p. 147.

abortion as Philosophy can show. We must, in order to do justice to the transcendental theory, give up definitely the habit of thinking of the conscious principle under the categories of substance and attribute, and in fact under any category whatsoever. The transcendental theory, sketched above, is clearly the theory of Śaṅkara which we have partly explained in connection with the doctrine of foundational consciousness, and Haldane's theory of foundational knowledge. The self, he says in another context, is not an *agent* of the *activity* of knowledge; on the contrary, it is essentially knowledge; knowledge, that is, is its very essence.<sup>23</sup> "Just as when it is asserted that 'that which shines in front is the Sun, that which shines to the south, to the west, to the north, and upwards, is the Sun,' what is really meant is that *brightness* is the nature of the Sun," similarly, when it is said that "the self is an *agent of cognition*," what is really meant is that "cognition is the very essence" of the self and not its "activity."<sup>24</sup> Self-consciousness,

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<sup>23</sup> James, *Loc. cit.*, p. 365.

<sup>24</sup> *Vedāntam usya svarūpam ityavagamyate—Com. on the Uṣāṇḍogyā Uṣ. VIII. 12. 5.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ātmanah sattāmātra eva jñānakartṛtvam na tu vyāpṛtatayā—loc. cit.* This whole passage, when literally translated, would run as follows.—The self's agency of knowledge is its mere existence, and not its activity; just as the Sun's agency of revelation is its mere existence, and not a function.

therefore, is not the consciousness of an *agent* possessing the activity of knowledge in the same way in which Caitra possesses the cow.<sup>25</sup>

Kant's thesis that self-consciousness cannot be brought under the categories has, we believe, an important significance for a right understanding of the nature of self. His real meaning, as it may now be easier to understand, is that the self, though undeniably real,—because it is always present as the transcendental ground of all our experience—cannot, yet, be brought under the conditions of what he calls the ‘understanding,’ the specific nature of which is this that it thinks everything discursively, ‘representing it by concepts, and so by mere predicates.’ This discursive understanding is sometimes called by Śaṅkara *Buddhi*, which is defined as that in which are hidden the three categories of knowledge, the knowable, and the knower.<sup>26</sup> Though it is necessary to represent the self as the knower or the subject of knowledge, yet it will be a serious blunder to think that knowledge is possessed by the knower or the subject, because, in reality, ‘the knower has no distinct

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<sup>25</sup> Compare *Ajñānabodhinī* 34, where it is said that when it is asserted that the knowledge is yours, what is really meant is that knowledge is yourself, much as the phrase ‘the head of Rāhu’ means that the head is the Rāhu itself.

<sup>26</sup> *Nigūḍhā usyām jñāna-jñeya-jñātr-padārtha itī guhā Buddhiḥ*—*Com. on the Tart. Up., Ch. I of the Brāhmaralla.*

existence apart from knowledge."<sup>27</sup> This knowledge which is the essence of the self is not of the nature of an *act*, yet, in conformity with the conditions of the discursive intellect, which describes everything by means of its properties (*jātyādidharma*), we describe it as the knowledge *of* the subject. As so described, the description, if taken literally, can only indicate indirectly, and not represent directly, the self.<sup>28</sup> The discursive intellect can represent only that which conforms to the categories of unity, cause, space, time, etc.; that is, it can represent what is determined by some kind of relation. And the result is that even when the self which is the transcendental condition of all objects is represented by the discursive intellect, it is necessarily described as 'something' that possesses the attribute of consciousness. Similarly, when the self is said to be a synthetic principle, it is represented as something like an agent exercising its combining activity and thus generating experience out of the multiplicity of sense-data. But such a representation, though necessary for discursive thinking, is not a true representation of the self; it is nothing more than a false representation arising out of the necessity of discursive thinking through the forms of language.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ātmanah svarūpam jñaptirna tato vyatiricyate—loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *Buddhidharmaviṣayeṇa jñānaśabdena tat lakṣyate na tu ucyate—loc. cit.*

Such discursive representations, in other words, are mere semblances or figurative images (*avabhāsa*) that are necessary for the purposes of descriptions only. They point indirectly to the self within which there is no distinction.

It may be noted even here, in order to avoid misunderstanding, that discursive thinking is not altogether condemned by Śaṅkara, as is done by the mystics or the agnostics. The self is beyond speech and thought, *not* because it is the denizen of a world altogether inaccessible to human faculties, but because it is presupposed by all distinctions including the distinction of subject from object or of agent from activity. Our knowledge must be based upon distinctions;<sup>29</sup> whatever is known must be known through the intellect (*buddhi-dvāreṇa* or *antaḥkaraṇa-dvāreṇa*). But in that case we must not be misled by the grammatical forms when the self is represented through the intellect; this is all that is meant by the warning against the discursive representation of the self.<sup>30</sup> The self can be described only in so far as it is represented in conformity with the forms of the intellect, and as so represented, we must distinguish

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<sup>29</sup> *Vīśeṣasaṃbandho hi upalabdhihetuḥ*—*Ibid.*, Ch. VI.

<sup>30</sup> In the language of the advaita literature, this means the connection of the self with the cavity of the intellect or *antaḥkaraṇa-guhātmā-saṃbandhaḥ*, through which the self must be known.

between the knower and the known. That is, though the self is of the nature of foundational knowledge, and, as such, devoid of the distinction between subject and object, yet it has to be described as the subject for which exists the object.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, the bulk of the advaita literature is exclusively devoted to the discovery of the foundational consciousness transcending what is given through the discursive intellect. And the study of the dream-experience and of dream-less sleep is one of those devices that are rightly considered as an effective help for understanding its reality and nature. In deep dreamless sleep, for instance, there is evidently a break in the psychical current, yet the sense of identity is not broken; nor is the memory of Peter confused with that of Paul, when they wake up in the morning. It would certainly be a mere sophistry to account for the feeling of identity without postulating an identical principle which persists through the different stages of waking consciousness, dream, and dreamless slumber. These three states, says Śaṅkara, come in succession, yet everyone recognises himself as 'I am he.'<sup>32</sup> "I think" accompanies not only the different

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<sup>31</sup> Such a subject is sometimes called *viśvānamaya* or the self which has assumed the character of, and got mingled with, *buddhi* or *antaḥkāraṇa*. See, for instance, Śaṅkara's *Commentary on the Brh. Up.* II. 1. 16.

<sup>32</sup> *Com. on Gauḍapāḍa-Kārikā* 1.

items of perception as Kant rightly said, it persists through the 'different states' undisturbed by the apparent break of psychical current in sleep. Identity, as distinct from mere continuity, in some form or other must be admitted, therefore, in order to account for this persistent recognition. Let it be granted that a time-less self is "a psychological monster," as Bradley puts it; but some plausible explanation must still be given of the undeniable facts of our life. Mere generic unity of the ever-perishing 'thoughts' does not explain it, and even a generic unity would be impossible without a persistent identical principle that does not itself change. James thinks that such an identical principle is a mere superfluity, because the thoughts may perish yet their ownership is never-lapsing, and the trick of transmission and appropriation is perfectly compatible with their changing nature. But this does not explain how Paul's feeling of identity remains undisturbed in spite of the fact that the 'thoughts' were entirely suspended for such a long interval. Even if it be conceded that the present thought inherits the contents of the dying thought, yet, sleep is a clear exception to the rule that 'what possesses the possessor possesses the possessed.'

Similarly, it does not seem to be an adequate explanation to refer to the "ideal identity and the continuity of the experienced."<sup>13</sup> All identity, on the

<sup>13</sup> Bradley, *Truth and Reality*, p. 195.



objective side, as we have contended above, must presuppose an identity on the subjective side. Bradley seems to be dissatisfied with his own explanation and offers yet another hypothesis, namely, that the unity of our lives depends upon the "felt background."<sup>34</sup> This perhaps might be accepted as his final solution of the problem which he himself declared as insoluble. But his readers are left in a hopeless confusion when he insists at the same time that the unity and the continuity "consist wholly in content or else they are nothing." This plainly means that continuity on the objective side is possible without identity on the subjective side.

The fact seems to be that Bradley\* did not solve the problem of identity-feeling which survived the break of psychical continuity. Here at least a most plausible explanation is offered by the advaita philosophy. The shortest explanation, as given by Śaṅkara, is this that "the appearance of unconsciousness here is due to the absence of objects, not to the absence of consciousness."<sup>35</sup> That is, the apparent gap in sleep is due to the fact that there are not here objects which are necessary for self-consciousness, though consciousness persists as an identical principle. Self-consciousness is the consciousness of the self as mediated

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>35</sup> *Viśayābhāvāt iyaṁ acetayamānatā na cartanyābhāvāt*  
—S B. II. 3. 18.

through the consciousness of objects, and as this mediation is impossible when there is no object, there is, consequently, no self-consciousness in the absence of the objects. Is there no inconsistency here, it is asked in another context, in accepting consciousness as the essence of the self and yet postulating a self in deep sleep which is unconscious of anything?<sup>36</sup> There can be no inconsistency, it is said in reply, between these two positions provided we understand that the self during sleep does see, though it appears to see nothing (*paśyannera na paśyati*). The sight of the seer, it is continued, is as permanent as the seer himself, much as the heat of the fire is co-eval with the fire. The self in such a state is like the sun which consists essentially in revelation or brightness and yet is talked of as the revealer of things. The sun, that is, has light as its permanent essence, and when it lights up things it does so in virtue of its very essence and not by virtue of its being something other than light.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the self in deep sleep is called the seer on account of its essential permanent sight. If sight had been a mere activity of the self, a mere accidental property of the self, then, of course, it

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<sup>36</sup> *Com. on the Brh. Up. IV. 3. 23.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ādityādayo nityaparakāśasvabhāvā eva santah svābhā-  
vikenā nityenaiva prakāśenā prakāśayanti, na hi aprakāś-  
ātmanah santah prakāśam kurrantah prakāśayanti iti ucyaṇte*  
—*loc. cit.*

could not be its essence. On the other hand, the self is said to be not-seeing in deep sleep, because there is not at that time something distinct from itself which it could see. Specific knowledge-events are conditioned by the inner sensibility (*antahkaraṇa*) and the sense-organs, and the latter are merged into one in sleep. Hence the self is no more a seer in the ordinary sense.

Śaṅkara's contentions need cause no surprise to us, in so far as they relate to the distinction we have already explained between fragmentary and foundational knowledge; consciousness, we have seen, is not an activity, but the very essence of the self, it is the self. He refers in this context also to the sun and the crystals in illustration of his contention that the different types of knowledge, such as, seeing, hearing, etc., are not different faculties (*śakti*) of the soul, but the latter is, by its very nature, knowledge which appears as different types of knowledge in consequence of the different sense-organs. The really new element in his contentions here is the explanation of the apparent unconsciousness in deep sleep. And it consists in this that the foundational consciousness, though present even in sleep, appears as unconscious owing to the absence of the objects including the modifications of sensibility. Self-consciousness, in other words, is mediated through the consciousness of objects, the latter, again, is conditioned by the mental

modifications produced by the things. Consequently, there can be no such self-consciousness when these conditions of objective knowledge are not fulfilled. In short, the mediated self-consciousness is absent in deep sleep, and hence arises the apparent break or gap in the psychical continuity. The self-conscious self exists, then, as it is put by Śaṅkara, in a state of unity with its real self; it has no more any specific type of knowledge and has no consciousness of outer or inner, just as a man loses all such consciousness when embraced by his beloved.

The epistemological significance of deep sleep has been sorely misinterpreted or ignored altogether. Even the modern idealists who believe in an eternal consciousness slur over the difficulties rather than show how such an eternal principle may be reconciled with the apparent gaps and unconscious intervals. Green, for instance, refers to Locke's admission that the same Socrates, sleeping and waking, must partake of the same consciousness, and remarks that the inference "which it suggests to his reader, that a self which does not slumber or sleep is not one which is born or dies, does not seem to have occurred to him."<sup>38</sup> But no attempt is made to reconcile his theory of eternal self with apparent gaps. If he had done it, he would easily develop some such theory as that of Śaṅkara,

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<sup>38</sup> *Works* I. p. 115.

and perhaps realise that the self-conscious self is absent during the gaps, though the eternal consciousness which is presupposed by the former never sleeps. That is, the mediated self-consciousness which is conditioned by the presence of the objects is also conditioned by an eternal consciousness in which there is no distinction of any kind whatsoever.

There is, however, a particular interpretation of Śaṅkara's theory of dreamless sleep, vouchsafed by no less an authority than Paul Deussen, which must be briefly considered at this place. "Essential to the soul," according to Duessen's reading of Śaṅkara, is "intelligence, but this intelligence is at the bottom imaginary."<sup>39</sup> And, consequently, "it makes in the end no difference whether this for us quite incomprehensible state is characterised in our fashion as a Negation of all volition, or in the Indian manner as an imaginary cognition, "which presupposes this Negation of all volition." This is how Deussen would perhaps exonerate Śaṅkara from the charge of intellectualism which he has elsewhere levelled against "the philosophising spirit of mankind in India, Greece, and modern times."<sup>40</sup> Such an interpretation, however, of Śaṅkara's theory of dreamless slumber, if true, would divest it of any epistemological importance.

<sup>39</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 315.

<sup>40</sup> *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 132.

A purely imaginary and hypothetical state is certainly too nebulous to be called either thought or will even when these are taken as universal principles from which all finite things originate. But is the state really one of imaginary cognition?

Deussen admits that in deep sleep, according to Śaṅkara, there is a total suspension of fragmentary knowledge as well as consciousness of distinctions either in the way of knower, knowledge, and knowable, or that of enjoyer and enjoyed. In the waking stage, on the other hand, such a consciousness of distinction is at the very basis of our experience and conduct. Now, what should be the proper term for this awareness of distinctions which pervades our waking life? It would surely be doing great violence to the ordinary usages of words to call it the 'will' or the 'emotion' of distinction. Consciousness, then, seems to be the best word we possess for carrying our meaning. It, according to Śaṅkara, is the ultimate principle of revelation which is presupposed by all objects, no matter whether the object is a pain or a pleasure, idea or image, desire or will. Even the 'Will' of Schopenhauer, as Haldane rightly observes, presupposes the reality of foundational knowledge. Even if it be conceded that Will is the final origin of Being, such a concession presupposes the consciousness of distinction in so far as we are contrasting the Will as *known* with Being as *known*. Knowledge,

consciousness, or awareness, cannot, therefore, be replaced by any anti-intellectual concept, such as will, in order to convey properly what we mean in such cases. It would then be unwarranted to accuse all thinkers of intellectualism simply on the ground that the subject-object relation, which is the most generic relation presupposed by all specific relations, is called Thought or Knowledge.

If so much is granted, then, the state in which there is no awareness of distinction must by contrast be called distinction-less awareness, or knowledge, or thought. And it would follow from this that neither Yājñavalkya nor Śaṅkara, nor, again, the modern idealists can be called intellectualists for using a term with intellectual or cognitive associations. And to discover Schopenhauer's Will in the state of dreamless sleep would be to put Śaṅkara's philosophy in an altogether wrong light, because what he intends to prove through the apparent gaps in sleep is that the consciousness of distinction is not a permanent feature of our life. All distinctions, in other words, presuppose an undivided and unchangeable conscious principle which cannot be so known during waking experience; and hence the epistemological importance of dreamless sleep.

One point, however, is quite clear from deep sleep. The term self-consciousness, if it means mediated self-consciousness, cannot be applied to the self in that

state. Nor is it possible, on the other hand, to deny the reality of consciousness in sleep, because to do so would be to accept the view of the materialists or the spiritualists like Kaṇāda or Locke. But the spiritualist's explanation of deep sleep, whether at the hands of Locke or those of his Indian predecessors, has been a standing enigma, hardly reconcilable with the fact of personal identity. In deep sleep, it is held by the thinkers of the Nyāya school, there is no knowledge, because the unconscious atomic mind enters into certain veins, called *purītat*, corresponding to the pericardium, which is supposed to be devoid of skin. The result is that the atomic mind (which is called *manas* by them) having resided then at a skirless place, there is no possibility of its coming into contact with skin, which is the condition of knowledge in general. Apart from the fanciful character of this explanation of the apparent unconsciousness in deep sleep, it will surely remain a mystery how, on such a supposition, the unconscious soul, which is the only permanent principle admissible by them, can account for the identity-feeling of the waking man. The consciousness of identity which is an undeniable fact requires for its adequate explanation an identical principle, and this is rightly seen by the spiritualists. But an essentially unconscious soul, which is no better than the all-pervasive space (*ākāśa*), can as little explain it as the stream or flux of ideas or thoughts



as conceived by James and the Buddhists. The apparent chasm cannot be bridged over on either hypothesis. The consciousness of the waking man is a newly generated event which may be similar, but not identical, with that of the man who went to sleep overnight. On such a supposition, Socrates sleeping and waking, as rightly seen by Locke, is not the same person, in spite of the identity of the soul-substance. The difficulty remains as insoluble in the theory of self as a flux. There is no possibility of a generic unity of the passing 'ideas' surviving the breaks in sleep.

It is necessary, therefore, to postulate consciousness in deep sleep, and the only explanation of the apparent gap must be found in the absence of mediated self-consciousness. That is, the self may exist as consciousness, even when there is no consciousness of objects. It persists at that time, not as a self-conscious self, but as the self, in the language of the advaita thinkers, as *prājñā* consisting in mere consciousness. Yājñavalkya puts it very beautifully, though a little paradoxically, when he says that in deep sleep the self "sees not, yet is he seeing, although he sees not; since for the seer there is no interruption of seeing because he is imperishable; but there is no second beside him, no other distinct from him for him to see."<sup>41</sup> The modern idealists who accept an eternal

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<sup>41</sup> *The Brh. Up.* IV, 3. 23.

consciousness and yet reject the notion of object-less consciousness would find in these words of Yājñavalkya a confirmation of, as well as a challenge to, their position.

These discussions lead us naturally to a very unique feature of consciousness, the explanation of which will throw a flood of light on some of the baffling problems of self. Consciousness, as we have seen, is the ultimate principle of revelation; but if it exists even in deep sleep, it must exist, then, without revealing anything. But does not this position involve a paradox? To many thinkers, ancient and modern, it is an insoluble paradox. So far as the modern absolutists are concerned, they would accept self-consciousness in deep sleep rather than an object-less consciousness. But such a position can be held only on one assumption, namely, that there are degrees in self-consciousness. In deep sleep, therefore, there must be an object presented to consciousness, though the consciousness of difference is at a minimum. But apart from any other difficulty which may be raised to such a position, the admission of degrees in an eternal principle is to admit in a roundabout way that the principle is not eternal at all. Degrees have a necessary reference to space and time, as Kant rightly saw. We must then either admit that the eternal principle is in time and space or give up the notion of degree in connection with an eternal self-consciousness.

We need not examine in detail Rāmānuja's contention in this connection that though there is no definite and clear 'I'-consciousness in deep sleep on account of the absence of any knowledge of the external things, yet it cannot be entirely absent.<sup>42</sup> Such a contention may be excused in a thinker who could not even accept any foundational type of knowledge apart from the fragmentary knowledge of sensuous origin, and who did not see any contradiction in the concept of eternal knowledge capable of contraction and expansion. (*Srayamaparicchinnam eva jñānam saṅkocavikāśārham.*) In fact, his notion of knowledge never rose beyond that of a subtle shining material thing, like the physical light; and, consequently, what was a mere analogy for Śaṅkara became for him knowledge itself. Similarly, the crudeness of his notion of consciousness is evident from his contention that consciousness can be an object of a conscious agent, that the self is a conscious substance, and yet consciousness is its attribute, though, again, this attribute is not like the other attributes, such as, whiteness, etc. The fact seems to be that Rāmānuja's theological interests were too strong to permit an unprejudiced exercise of logical insight. He would unhesitatingly allow logic to be flung to the winds provided this saved his religious predilections.

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<sup>42</sup> *Suṣuptāvapi na ahaṁbhāvarigamaḥ*—*Loc. cit.*

In the meantime, we must accept it as a very plausible theory that there is no mediated self-consciousness in deep sleep. Contentless consciousness, on the other hand, will not be so absurd as it seems to be, if we remember that our analysis here is not of any particular cognitive psychosis of the waking life. Yet, we are to analyse a state which is not any of the states of our waking experience; hence, we are to depend more upon the cogency of arguments than upon retrospective analysis for a proper comprehension of deep sleep. If it is admitted that where there is no possibility of mediation, there is no self-consciousness, and *vice versa*, it must be admitted also that in deep sleep there is contentless consciousness, otherwise, the identity-feeling as well as the theory of eternal consciousness would remain unexplained.

Foundational consciousness, therefore, which does not sleep is yet consciousness; it is not a relation, but the ground of all relations. If the terms 'self' and 'consciousness' be used, as they are very often used in modern philosophy, in the sense of a relation, then the foundational consciousness cannot be either a self or a consciousness. But we have found ample reason to call it consciousness presupposed by all knowledge-events or fragmentary consciousness. The famous argument of Descartes on the basis of the *cogito* was irrefutable at least to the extent that none can deny the reality of consciousness. His mistake was to

suppose that the *cogitatio* could warrant the irrefutability of a spirit or a rational soul as a substance. He could as little think of the *cogitatio* without a cogitator as A. S. Pringle-Pattison or Rāmānuja.

If then it has to be admitted that the foundational consciousness of Haldane or Śaṅkara cannot be denied, and if we agree to call it the transcendental self or pure self as distinct from the relational self or the relational consciousness, it must also be admitted that the transcendental self is the presupposition of all distinctions including the distinction of consciousness from content. Now, it was truly said by Descartes that *cogitatio* included all the conscious activities of the mind, such as volition, emotion, and sensation. There is a sense in which all these may be rightly called *modi cogitandi*, in so far as the latter presuppose the former; consciousness in fact cannot be literally modified into the emotion or the sensation, yet it is the unchangeable principle which is at the background of all changing mental states.

There is, however, one important point in his analysis of consciousness which may be made our starting-point for a further development of the advaita theory of self. The essence of the soul, according to him, consists in thought, and in regard to this, he admits, in reply to the objections raised by P. Gassendi, that "there is none of my activities of which I am wholly certain (in the sense of having metaphysical

certitude, which alone is here involved), save thinking alone. For example, you have no right to make the inference: I walk, hence I exist, except in so far as our awareness of walking is a thought; it is of this alone that the inference holds good."<sup>43</sup> So the only metaphysical certitude for Descartes is thought or awareness, and it is thought which is the essence of the soul. In the soul, therefore, thought and existence are identical. It is true that he still adheres to the grammatical form of language and supposes a soul-substance behind the thinking, in spite of his admission that our minds have a "proneness to fall into error," because "words often impede me and I am almost deceived by the terms of ordinary language."<sup>44</sup> But if he had really avoided the deception caused by "the forms of speech invented by the vulgar," he could easily see that it was not in the soul-substance, but in the *awareness* or *thinking* that knowledge and existence are identical.

In the foundational consciousness or the transcendental self, in a similar sense, there can be no distinction between existence and knowledge; it is not only the presupposition of all distinctions, as Haldane rightly emphasises, but it is equally the ground of the distinction we ordinarily make between knowing and being, or between an object and the knowledge of the

<sup>43</sup> *Descartes*, edited by Prof. R. M. Eaton, p. 250.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

object. This peculiar character of consciousness may be called its *absolute immediacy*; here, to know is to be, and to exist is to be known. This absolute immediacy of consciousness is signified by the advaita thinkers when they describe the self as *aparokṣa* and *svaparakāśa*. It is the ultimate principle of revelation which does not stand in need of any other principle for being revealed, much as one light does not require another light for its own revelation; on the other hand, it is an absolutely immediate experience in which there is no distinction of subject from the object, or the knower from the known. The self is self-illuminated or self-revealed, it is urged by Vidyāraṇya, because it, like light, has revelation in its own existence without being revealed by something other than itself,<sup>45</sup> and because it is immediately experienced, though not known through the senses (*Anindriyagocaratve satyaparokṣatvāt.*)

We need not enter upon an explanation of the massive arguments which the advaita thinkers have heaped upon the subject in defending this immediate non-objectifiable experience from all possible attacks from the non-advaita philosophers. This experience, however, need cause no surprise to the modern thinkers in view of the general unanimity of a number of acute

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<sup>45</sup> *Ātmā svaparakāśaḥ svasattvīyām prakāśavyatirekarakatvāt*—*Vivaraṇa-Prameya-Saṅgrahaḥ*, edited by Pramathanātha Tarkabhuṣaṇa, III, p. 231.

philosophers on the immediateness of our knowledge of the self. Prof. Alexander, for instance, has long made us familiar with his well-known distinction between knowledge in the way of contemplation and knowledge in the form of enjoyment. "I cannot have knowledge of my mind in the sense of making it an object of contemplation, for that would mean that my mind could act upon itself. But I can know my mind, for I am my mind, which is an experienced experiencing, though not an experienced object."<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Ward's theory of Pure Ego which cannot be known in the sense in which knowledge implies an object, and his insistence that experience is wider than knowledge, are essentially attempts to point to a non-objectifiable immediate experience, though Ward himself lost his bearings on account of his initial assumption that the Pure Ego was one term of the relation between subject and object in which experience was supposed to consist. Finally, Bradley's account of what he calls immediate experience is a very near approach to the advaita theory of self. While condemning the relational self as a mere bundle of discrepancies, and urging that the main bulk of the elements on the side of the self and on the side of the not-self is interchangeable, in his *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley thinks elsewhere that immediate experience opens the one road

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<sup>46</sup> *The Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 1910-11, p. 19.



to the solution of ultimate problems.<sup>47</sup> This immediate experience is "an immediate feeling, a knowing and being in one;" and the "entire relational consciousness," it is supposed, "is experienced as falling within a direct awareness" which is "itself non-relational." It can neither be explained nor described, because "description necessarily means translation into objective terms and relations."

This unanimity of opinions does not, of course, mean that the advaita doctrine is, therefore, true. But what it does prove is that the theory of self as *svapra-kāśa* is not an entirely fanciful and meaningless dogma of a particular school of Indian philosophy. The nature of the advaita theory of immediate experience may be made clearer by an examination of the confusion into which such an accomplished thinker as Jayanta Bhaṭṭa has fallen. In an elaborate criticism of the advaita doctrine,—which perhaps evinces party-prejudice more clearly than logical insight—Jayanta observes that the advaita device of replacing the term 'perception' by another term '*aparokṣa*,' though in fact one is a mere synonym of the other, may deceive the children, not the accomplished thinkers.<sup>48</sup> It is very queer indeed, he continues, that the self, though it could not be an

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<sup>47</sup> *Truth and Reality*, p. 160.

<sup>48</sup> *Nyāya-Maṇjarī*, Gangādhara Sāstrī's edition, Vol. VIII, Part 2, p. 432.

object of perception should yet be admitted to be an object of immediate experience

We must, in order to avoid repetition, recollect here some of the contentions of the previous pages. Consciousness, we have seen, is neither a relation between two entities, nor a quality of a soul-substance nor, again, is it a process or change. It is, on the contrary, the presupposition of all relations, of all substances and qualities, as well as of all changes and modifications. In this sense, it is, in the language of Haldane, foundational, and its irrefutability is proved by the fact that it is presupposed by the same man who seeks to refute it. This foundational consciousness is the transcendental self, or, to put it more strictly, consciousness *is* the self. The two terms are perfectly interchangeable, and while adding the terms 'transcendental' and 'foundational,' we must not fall into the error of thinking that these are adjectives of a transcendent substance. In the self, again, there is no distinction, because it is the presupposition of all distinctions. So, when it is said that the self is given in an immediate experience, we must guard ourselves against the misleading forms of language. In the self-enjoyment of consciousness, there is no distinction of a self from its enjoyment, no difference of the revealing from the revealed self, though such distinctions and differences are inevitable when we are to *express* it in language.

One may accept or, again, he may reject Śaṅkara's theory of *Māyā* when it is used in the sense that the entire world of plurality, viewed from the standpoint of Absolute Experience, is as unreal a stuff as our dreams are made of. But everyone must be grateful to him for what he has done for shattering the philosophical prejudices born of language. Philosophical controversy has frequently lived on the illusion created by language; our analysis of experience has been often influenced by the grammatical forms of the language in which we express our thought. And the result is that the real forms of existence are supposed to correspond with the linguistic forms, and even when it is protested that such a correspondence does not exist, the critics accept it uncritically and then complain that the theory under discussion does not carry conviction. The illusion born of language has perhaps nowhere created such havocs as in the problem of self. *Māyā*, which is defined as consisting essentially in name and form, acts here as a veritable veil covering the true nature of the self, because, in spite of all careful expositions, it becomes difficult for even acute thinkers to penetrate the illusory veil of language and destroy, to put it in the technical language of Indian philosophy, the *vikalpaṛtti*.

Jayanta's confusion between the perception of self and the immediate experience of self is a brilliant illustration of the difficulty we are considering here.

It has never been denied by the advaita thinkers that the self, in order to be described or expressed in conformity with the conditions of discursive understanding, must be described by introducing differences and distinctions into what in reality is above all difference and differentiation. The discursive understanding (which is indifferently called *Buddhi*, *Vijñāna*, and *Antahkaraṇa*), it has been frequently admitted, gives us a describable and explainable self. But we must not forget that this is only the semblance or shadow of the real self; that is, the form of the language in which the real self is expressed does not correspond to the form in which the self really exists. But Jayanta, in agreement with the critics of the advaita thinkers, persists in reading the linguistic form into the form of the real self, and then complains that the self given in immediate experience cannot be distinguished from a self which is an object of perception.

Here Jayanta seems to make the same mistake as is committed by Descartes. Thomas Hobbes objected that Descartes had assumed without proving that the thinking substance which exercised thought was the spirit, the understanding, or the reason, rather than "something corporeal." But "it does not seem to be good reasoning to say: I am exercising thought, hence I am thought; or I am using my intellect, hence

I am intellect."<sup>49</sup> If this type of reasoning is to be accepted, then "in the same way I might say, I am walking; hence I am the walking." In reply to such a criticism, Descartes re-asserts that when he says that this is the spirit, he understands by it "not mere faculties, but rather what is endowed with the faculty of thinking." Nor is there any "parity between walking and thinking," he continues, for "walking is usually held to refer only to that action itself, while thinking applies now to the action, now to the faculty of thinking, and again to that in which the faculty exists." It may be observed that Descartes fails to give a satisfactory reply to Hobbes whose doubt was, not with regard to the inherence of the attribute of thought in a substance, but with regard to the assumption that this substance was spiritual rather than corporeal. If the substance fell beyond and was something apart from thought, Descartes had no ground for assuming it to be spiritual, and it was here that Hobbes lay his finger. And ultimately, Descartes had to admit that it was taken to be a spirit because it was a "requirement forced on us by custom." Yet, as we have seen above, he comes to attach metaphysical certitude to thinking alone, in reply to P. Gassendi

Almost the same difficulty confronts Jayanta when he, presumably anticipating objections from an

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<sup>49</sup> *Descartes*, edited by Prof. R. M. Eaton, p. 195.

Indian Hobbes, has to prove that knowledge inheres in the soul-substance, and not in the corporeal pot which is the object of perception. The only answer he can give is that, though consciousness is a mere adventitious quality of the soul-substance, yet it inheres in this substance alone, because this is how all people think (*sarvalokaprasiddhatvāt—Loc. cit*) And after all, he adds, the nature of the things cannot be called in question.

Thus Jayanta, as little as Descartes, could pierce through the veil of linguistic forms, and both posited a substance lying behind consciousness, and, consequently, could offer no stronger argument for the spirituality of the soul-substance than appealing to custom and common practice.

These perplexities of Descartes and Jayanta arose ultimately from their attempt to translate knowledge or consciousness in terms of something other than itself, and to posit a substance behind what is alone irrefutable, namely, consciousness. The conscious principle being the most irrepressible logical implicate of all experience, it cannot be proved in the same way in which the objects are proved or refuted. All proof and refutation pertain to the things which can be at least doubted; that is, they are relevant only in respect of, in the language of the Vedānta, the adventitious things (*āgantuka*), and not in respect of what is presupposed by all proof and disproof (*svayamsiddha*).

Śaṅkara, therefore, seems to be altogether right when he dubs as dullards those who think that "whatever exists can be known by proofs and whatever does not exist cannot be proved because it is like the horns of a hare."<sup>50</sup> The logical implicates of experience defy this ordinary type of proof. The conscious self, in other words, was wrongly supposed by the non-advaita thinkers as one object among other objects requiring the same kind of proof, or as *prameya*, as the Nyāya philosophers put it. Once it was assumed that the self was on the same level with other things in respect of proof and disproof, they differed from one another as to the nature of the proof. Most of the Nyāya philosophers supposed that the self was proved through inference from the cognition, pleasure, pain, etc., which were alone directly known through introspection. Others, such as Udyotakara, appealed to direct introspection as the source of our knowledge of the self. Thus unnecessary dust was raised by their assumption of a soul-substance behind knowledge, though the reality of this fact of knowledge was never denied by any of them.

But neither inference nor introspection is capable of proving the reality of the conscious self, for the simple reason that the self is not a thing in the democracy of things. What introspection can guarantee

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<sup>50</sup> *Commentary on the Kenopaniṣad*, Part III

is the reality of pleasure and pain, desire and aversion, because they are objects; but the self as foundational consciousness, as the universal logical implicate of all known things, cannot be grasped as an object. That *for* which my entire world has a meaning, that in the light of which my universe shines, cannot be objectified and perceived in the same way in which the cow or the tree is perceived. Self-consciousness is not, therefore, the consciousness of the self as an object given in introspection; and Hume as well as his Indian predecessors, the Buddhists, failed to find it in the flux of mental states, because they wanted to know it as a definite type of object among other objects.

The puzzles born of the assumption that the self is an object known through introspection are well illustrated by the infinite regress which develops as soon as the problem of self-knowledge is faced squarely. When I know the pot, knowledge arises from the mechanical contact between the self and the pot, and the result is that the pot is known. But, as the self, *ex hypothesi*, cannot manifest itself, it must require another contact between itself as an object and the self as the knower, and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus, the birth of an infinite number of contacts together with the ever-receding self makes it impossible to know the self in a particular act of introspection. It leads really to agnosticism.



The case does not materially improve when Prabhākara, in order to avoid the infinite regress, urges that the self is revealed by knowledge, not as an object, but as a subject, and that knowledge is known, not as something known, but simply as knowledge. It is difficult even to put any intelligible meaning into such assertions. Knowledge requires, according to this position, some kind of proof (*i.e.*, it is a *prameya*), yet we are warned against taking it to be something known (*saṃvedya*). Similarly, when knowledge is supposed to reveal simultaneously itself, the subject, and the object, we are asked to think of the subject as revealed, yet warned against taking the revealed subject as an object. But such a demand is evidently as absurd as that of James Ward who would expect us to believe that experience is a relation between subject and object, and urge at the same time that the subject is within experience, though it cannot be known as an object. In fact, both Prabhākara and Ward must lead one to the agnostic position that the self cannot be known at all, though both would perhaps repudiate this charge.

If we add to this the supposition that knowledge inheres in the soul, and that inherence is a relation requiring two terms, as urged by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers, then the well-known criticism of relation, which Śaṅkara levelled against such a position, and which has been made familiar to us by Bradley, seems

to be unanswerable. You have either to admit, it is urged, "that the relation itself is joined by a certain relation to the two terms which are related, and then that relation will again require a new relation, and you will thus be compelled to postulate an infinite series of relations; or else you will have to maintain that the relation is not joined by any relation to the terms which it binds together, and from that will result the dissolution of the bond which connects the two terms of the relation."<sup>51</sup>

Thus, the mechanical theory of knowledge leads from all sides to the *regressus ad infinitum* (*anavasthāprasāṅga*), which, as rightly held by Bradley, is an unremoved contradiction.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> S.B. II. 1. 18, and II. 2. 13. Compare Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 18 and 28.

<sup>52</sup> An interesting example of cutting the Gordian knot by side-tracking the real issue is furnished by J. Ward. While Prabhākara sees a contradiction in the infinite regress and attempts to remove it, Ward refuses to acknowledge any difficulty in the indefinite regress and observes that though we may reach the limit of *our* experience in reflexion, yet, "there is no absurdity in supposing a consciousness more evolved and explicit than our self-consciousness," that is, "a God-consciousness, as the veritable limit of all."—*Psychological Principles*, p. 372. But if the infinite regress is admitted to be inseparable from human self-consciousness, it is no explanation of the difficulty to push it forward and say that somehow it is resolved in a consciousness higher than human consciousness.

## ABSOLUTE CONSCIOUSNESS

The position we have so far reached under the guidance of Śaṅkara, Kant, Green, Haldane, and Bradley is that an unchanging, unobjectifiable, immediate, consciousness must be postulated for explaining the poorest type of knowledge and the facts of experience. Truth emerges from mutual supplementation and correction of different interpretations of experience; and it is, therefore, necessary, for a further development of our position, to examine its strength in resolving some of the difficulties that have been repeatedly pointed out by the critics of modern absolutism which in many respects, as we have seen above, is an unconscious exposition of the advaita doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Bradley's doctrine of immediate experience has provoked much criticism, and, therefore, to depend upon Bradley would be like leaning upon a broken reed. One of the most cautious examinations of Bradley's theory has been recently furnished by Prof. G. Watts Cunningham in *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*, pp. 382—407. His contentions seem, on the whole, not unjustifiable; and it will be, therefore, necessary to see how far our position may be kept free from the main difficulties in the theory of immediate experience.

Bradley's supra-relational immediate experience in which "the experienced and the experience are one," and Prof. Alexander's formulation of the knowledge of mind as an enjoyment which is an "experienced experiencing," are, as we have contended in the last chapter, unexpected confirmations of the advaita theory of self from the realistic and the idealistic quarters respectively. Its further elaboration may now be attempted through Śaṅkara's theory of the Absolute; and it will incidentally dissipate the wide-spread illusion that the advaita Absolute is an altogether transcendent Principle, sitting, like an oriental potentate, out of all connections with our finite experiences. Such a transcendent Absolute may inspire the sentiments of adoration and admiration like a colossal marble structure, but what it cannot precisely do is to serve as an explanatory principle of our finite experience.

We must resist here the temptation to examine the current view that Śaṅkara's position was essentially anticipated by the Buddhistic idealists, and that "looked at from that point of view there would be very little which could be regarded as original in Śaṅkara."<sup>2</sup> There can be no two opinions in respect of the fact that some Buddhists, such as, Aśvaghoṣa, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Sthiramati, and others, were

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. S. N. Das Gupta, *Indian Idealism*, p. 195.

eminent absolutists who taught a type of monistic philosophy that cannot be easily distinguished from that of Śaṅkara. Particularly, the *Vijñaptimātra* of Vasubandhu can be hardly distinguished from the Brahman of Śaṅkara. In fact, no philosopher can expound an entirely original doctrine without being indebted in any way to his predecessors. The originality of a philosopher consists in his capacity for an intelligent appropriation of the previously formulated doctrines and their development in new directions, rather than in shooting a new bullet from a newly manufactured pistol. But when it is remarked that "Śaṅkara does not try to prove philosophically the existence of the pure self as distinct from all other things," and that he "is satisfied in showing" it to be the teaching of the Upaniṣads, it may not be easy for everyone to subscribe to this view.<sup>3</sup> Such a remark, though made by many modern orientalists, requires justification at least in view of the contrary opinion of P. Deussen that Śaṅkara "makes a far more extensive use" of philosophical reflection as an aid than might appear from his anti-rational expressions, and that it is "not merely theological, but also in the highest degree philosophical."<sup>4</sup> It is

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163. and *History of Indian Philosophy* I, p. 435,

<sup>4</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 96. Dr. Das Gupta appears to attach much importance to the opinions of such

true that he does sometimes claim the privilege of flouting logic by appealing to the Upaniṣads; but the philosophical analysis that is avoided at one place is supplied at another. The Absolute, he says explicitly, is not to be realised through mere scriptural texts, on the contrary, it can be understood only through the threefold stage of authority, reasoning, and contemplation.<sup>5</sup> Even in his principal work, the object of the Vedānta is said at the beginning to be to prove the identity of the individual self with the Absolute, because there are conflicting opinions on the nature of the self. And all the non-advaita theories may be refuted, as he says explicitly, *independently of the scriptural texts*.<sup>6</sup> The fact is that the Vedānta, far from faring without logic, has to remove "all doubts arising out of conflicting opinions" (*vipratīpatyāśankā*) as a necessary part of its discipline, even when the scriptures fail to provide appropriate texts.

The very first thing to be noted in expounding Śaṅkara's theory of Absolute Self is the contrast which his method of approach offers to that of modern

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scholars as Dr. Th. Stcherbatsky who has supposed that Śaṅkara "does not accept the authority of logic as a means of cognising the Absolute, but he deems it a privilege of the Vedānta to fare without logic since he has Revelation to fall back upon."—*The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> *Nānyathā śravaṇamātreṇa—Com. on the Brh. Up. IV. 2, 5.*

<sup>6</sup> *Iha tu vākyanirapekṣaḥ etc. S B II. 2. 1.*

absolutism. In the latter, the finite self is a self-discrepant reality which forces thought to transcend it, the finite self, that is, has no logical stability, though it is the highest reality, the most consistent reality, among the finite things of the world. The Absolute, on the other hand, is a perfect system, a perfectly consistent whole, and, as such, it is the resting place of thought, it is the Idea in which thought finds its fullest satisfaction. In sharp contrast with this method of approach, Śaṅkara seeks to discover the Absolute, not by transcending the finite self, but by a deeper analysis of the self in us which is erroneously taken to be anything less than the Absolute; it is, in other words, 'the method of discovering the Absolute by removing the erroneous notions about our self which, though in fact the Absolute, is falsely taken to be finite and relative. The Absolute, he says, exists and is real in the highest sense, because it is the self in us which none can deny'.<sup>7</sup> The latter does not possess a particular degree of reality, as distinct from the former, but it is the highest reality. There is essentially no distinction between the two; and, consequently, the problem which a philosopher must set to himself in respect of the Absolute is, not to prove the Absolute from the

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<sup>7</sup> S. B. I. 1. 1.

relative, but to account for the rise of the relative from the Absolute.

In view of this contrast of the advaita method with that of modern absolutism, it will be evident that what we have so far said about the foundational consciousness is as much true of the finite self as of the Absolute Self. If the finite self is essentially an unchanging, immediate non-objectifiable, consciousness the same must be true of the Absolute Self. Hence an exposition of the Absolute will necessarily mean a further development and clarification of the principle of unchanging immediate, consciousness.

The Absolute Self, for Śaṅkara, may be negatively defined as that which is diametrically opposed to an object, it has none of the characteristics which belong to the objects. It is neither a quality, nor a substance, neither a cause nor an effect; neither the creator nor the created; in fact all categories are applicable to the world of objects, and not to the Absolute. All categories are relational, and, therefore, are inapplicable to what is non-relational. But this must not be interpreted as leading to the doctrine that the Absolute is pure nothing, a mere thing-in-itself in the Kantian sense. The agnostic's Reality is in fact a self-contradictory reality, if it can be called a reality at all, it falls entirely beyond our human faculties, inconceivable, unthinkable, and perfectly unknowable. Thus, as we have remarked frequently, Śaṅkara's



doctrine of self is one which is developed by a careful avoidance of the opposite fallacies of pan-objectivism and agnosticism. On the one hand, he is anxious to emphasise that the self is distinct from the not-self as light is distinct from darkness, that the conditions under which the objects stand are inapplicable to the subject. But lest the self should be misunderstood as a pure nothing, he adds, sometimes immediately, that what is thus beyond the conditions of the knowable objects is our very self. The self in this sense is said to be beyond the known and above the unknown.

Most of the self-theories, either in India or the West, have succumbed to pan-objectivism; while those which have successfully withstood this fatal materialistic tendency have lost themselves in mysticism and agnosticism. Some of these we have examined in the foregoing pages; but to do it exhaustively would be neither possible within the limits of this work nor necessary for our purpose. What must have been clear by now is that no theory of self can stand logical scrutiny if it fails to avoid these two extremes of pan-objectivism and agnosticism. The self, as we have urged, is a reality which is both undefinable and undeniable. This peculiar character of the self has been missed partly because it has been supposed that whatever is undefinable must be also unintelligible and a pure nothing, and largely because the very grammatical forms of the language in which we are

to express our thought have encouraged the conception of a self as something like the table or the chair, or, as a man looking, to put it after an Indian philosopher, through the windows of the sense-organs.

But we have seen very clearly that the self is not something like a table possessing different qualities of hardness, colour, and weight; it is, in other words, a reality that cannot be brought under the categories of substance and attribute; on the contrary, the self is consciousness, and not a substance possessing consciousness. And it should be, therefore, clear why it must be both undefinable as well as undeniable. That it is undeniable seems to be so evident a fact that any imposing array of dialectical weapons for proving it would look like wasting philosophical ingenuity on a trifle. You may deny or doubt everything, as Śaṅkara and Descartes urged, but you cannot deny the fact of consciousness.

As for the other alternative, it will be enough to remember Śaṅkara's analysis of definition which always consists in bringing what is defined under a generic unity with specific difference through the attributes by which it is differentiated from other things belonging to the same genus. But consciousness cannot be so defined inasmuch as it is the ultimate presupposition of all knowable objects. Whatever is known, as we have observed repeatedly, must be presented to consciousness, and in this sense it is the

universal presupposition of all things and of all inter-objective relations. In order to be defined, consciousness must be brought under a higher genus, and also differentiated from things other than itself belonging to the same genus. But this would be to contradict the assertion that it is the ultimate presupposition of all knowable objects. It will also commit ourselves to the absurd position that consciousness has an attribute by which it may be distinguished from things other than itself. Once, therefore, it is admitted that consciousness is *sui generis*, it must also be conceded that it cannot be defined in the ordinary way. It may be very interesting to note here that at least one of the modern philosophers has come to admit the essential truth of our contentions. Thinking as well as knowing, willing and desiring, it has been remarked by J. Cook Wilson, are activities of consciousness "This, therefore, is a case where the ordinary idea of definition is not applicable. Ordinary definition is a statement of the general kind (genus) to which the thing to be defined belongs and of the characteristics of the particular sort (species), that is the differentiation of the kind (genus), to which the thing to be defined belongs."<sup>s</sup> The process of definition, it is further remarked, must end in something "which cannot be defined, in the given sense of definition, or

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<sup>s</sup> *Statement and Inference*, p. 38.

the process would never end. Definition in fact itself presupposes the ending of the process in elements which cannot be themselves defined, in so-called ultimate distinctions explicable from themselves alone. This does not leave our notions indefinite, because the nature of such undefinable universals is perfectly definite and is apprehended by us in the particular instances of them."

How far these remarks of Wilson on the nature of consciousness are but a confirmation of the views we have so far explained is too clear to require any special comment. It is of the nature of the undefinable universals which are yet perfectly definite, and intelligible. To ask to define consciousness, therefore, Wilson continues, would be to commit "the fallacy of asking an unreal question, a question which is such in verbal form only and to which no real questioning in thought can correspond." In professing to explain, therefore, such a term as consciousness, the result will be "identical statements, for we should use in our explanation the very notion we professed to explain, disguised perhaps by a change of name or by the invention of some new term, say cognition or some similar imposture." Wilson then concludes: "Our experience of knowing then being the presupposition of any enquiry we undertake, we cannot make knowing itself a subject of enquiry in the sense of asking what knowing is."

Here we find an excellent formulation, from an unexpected quarter, of the essentials of our contentions about the foundational character of consciousness, as well as about its undefinable nature. Incidentally, it exposes the fallacy of presentationism which clings to the unwarranted assumption that whatever is real must be a definable object of thought. The truth is that Reality is wider than the world of definable objects, though Kant supposed that it was limited to what he called the phenomenal world. The categories are certainly applicable to the objects of experience alone, but from this it does not follow that whatever does not conform to them must necessarily be a mere 'x.' Kant could not catch the self and turned round and round it in a perpetual circle, because he wanted to catch it, like the empiricists, as a definable object. His assumption here was identical with that of the rational psychologists whom he was criticising. The self, again, does not reduce itself to something "completely empty of all content," simply on the ground that it is not conformable to the categories. It is true, says Śaṅkara, that by 'the known' we mean "whatever is the object of special knowledge, and as all such objects can be known somewhere, to some extent and by someone, and so forth, the whole world is meant by the term 'the known.' " But the self is something entirely different (*anyadeva*). From

this we must not conclude that it is unknown.<sup>9</sup> The objects must conform to the categories of genus, action, etc. (*jāti, kriyā*, etc.) But the self cannot be unknown simply because it does not conform to the categories; and to draw such a conclusion would be as absurd as that of a man "who fails to see, though near, the existence of himself, which completes the number, when closely engaged in counting the persons other than himself."<sup>10</sup>

The empiricists like Locke, James and the Indian realists who tried to discover the self through introspection made a similarly futile attempt. Is not the self, asks Śaṅkara, known at all, and, if so, does not the scripture contradict itself when it says: "You should not try to know the thinker of thought and the knower of knowledge?" Certainly, Śaṅkara replies, this would be contradictory "if he is to be directly perceived like joy, etc."<sup>11</sup> But the self is neither an object of external nor of internal perception, yet its reality cannot be denied.

Enough perhaps has been said in explication of the undefinability of the self as consciousness. But this fact does not make it unintelligible through human faculties; we need not appeal to any extra-human or

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<sup>9</sup> *Com. on the Kenopaniṣad* I. 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Com. on the Tait. Up. Brahmapallī*.

<sup>11</sup> *Summary of the Ch. IV. of the Ait. Up.*

extraordinary intuition for understanding the nature of consciousness. Because it is perfectly intelligible, though undefinable. It will help a further clarification of the nature of the self if we now turn to Śaṅkara's explanation of the Absolute or *Brahman*, and, we believe, it will be clear that consciousness is not only immediate in the sense that it is ever known though not known as an object, but it is necessarily absolute. In this sense, if the self is given in an immediate experience, it is also an Absolute Immediate Experience.<sup>12</sup>

The Absolute, we must repeat, is not, for Śaṅkara, something essentially different from the self which we know immediately, and, consequently, the method of establishing its reality is that of a further analysis of our own self which is consciousness. The contrast of the advaita conception of the difference between the individual self and the Absolute with that of the Hegelian idealists may be very well seen from the

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<sup>12</sup> It may be noted that the advaita term '*aparokṣānubhūti*' does not necessarily mean mystic intuition, or an extraordinary perception of the character of the religious ecstasy. Śaṅkara uses the word '*aparokṣa*' at the very beginning of his principal work in the ordinary sense of immediate experience. The term, in fact, means any immediate perception not arising from the senses. But it is also used in a wider sense to include immediate sense-perception as well as any other type of immediate knowledge not originating from the senses. The term is clearly explained by Pro. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 345.

remarks of an Indian Hegelian. In spite of the divergence of opinion on a number of subjects connected with Hegel's philosophy, we are told by Dr. Hiralal Halidar, the leading exponents of absolutism agree that the Absolute is a concrete whole, it is "the unity which realises *itself* in the differences;" and not a unity in which all differences are lost. But how do we come to posit the reality of such an Absolute? The logic of this type of absolutism, it is replied, lies in the conviction that the conception of an individual including in its knowledge the whole of Reality which at the same time it excludes is not a satisfying concept. "It is a contradictory conception pointing to the solution of it in the inclusion of the individuals in a wider unity, where it and other selves like it come together and are commingled without loss of their individuality."<sup>13</sup> The finite is supposed to be a 'contradictory self,' though it resolves the greater contradictions which are in the not-selves, such as matter, when regarded in abstraction from the finite self. Nothing can be external to consciousness; but as consciousness exists through its opposition to the 'other,' which it at the same time annuls, and as the unity of my consciousness does not exercise this double function completely, there must be an Absolute Unity.

In view of a strong tendency in contemporary Indian philosophy to obscure the difference between

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<sup>13</sup> *Neo-Hegelianism*, p. 466.



modern idealism and the advaita absolutism, it will be useful to follow Dr. Haldar's formulation of the former a little further. The Absolute, he adds, is not a mere aggregate, it is a conscious organic unity, and though not personal as man is personal, it is super-personal, because it must be conscious or rather a self-conscious unity realised in the self-consciousness of each individual. The absolutists before McTaggart, it is continued, did not emphasise the fact that the self-differentiations of the Absolute are themselves persons. McTaggart, on the other hand, while rightly emphasising that each of the differentiations of the Absolute must be a spirit, shrinks from the position that the Absolute must also be a person. The Absolute, we are told in another context, is not the "synthesis of finite experiences; it is the finite selves, on the contrary, which arise out of the limitation of the Absolute life and experience."<sup>14</sup> Our knowledge of the Absolute, however, is bound to be imperfect, yet it is a "necessary corollary of Hegel's theory" that the Absolute, as a harmonious Whole cannot be other than blissful. Thus, the True, the Good, the Beautiful—"this must ever remain the fittest description of the Absolute."<sup>15</sup>

Thus, it is clear that Dr. Haldar's difference

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<sup>14</sup> *Essays*, p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> *Essays*, p. 42.

from the other British Hegelians centres round the problem of personality, but he agrees with them in respect of the main outlines of the nature of the Absolute and that of the finite self, and he clearly shows why thought must transcend the finite self and find satisfaction in an Absolute Experience. "The basis of my thought," he admits, "is undoubtedly Hegelian," though it has been modified in later years.<sup>16</sup> It is evident then that there is a deep chasm between the advaita absolutism and its modern type. Immediate experience is the very heart of Śaṅkara's absolutism, whereas Hegel would never tolerate pure immediacy in absolutism, and this was at the root of his well-known criticism of the *unmittelbares Wissen* of Jacobi. It is true that there was a stage in the development of Hegel's thought when he accepted as the ultimate criterion of truth some type of immediacy to which reason was supposed to be unable to rise, but this was only a stage which he overgrew, and as a result, he broke off his friendship with Schelling. The strength of Hegelian idealism is in its conception of the concrete universal, the mediated unity, whereas Śaṅkara's absolutism is nothing if it is shorn of immediate experience. Other interesting points of difference will suggest themselves automatically as we proceed to expound his doctrine of the Absolute Self.

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<sup>16</sup> *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 216.

One of the places where Śaṅkara formulates clearly his doctrine of the Absolute is the *Brahmaballī* of the *Tait. Up.* The Absolute (*Brahman*), he starts by saying, is Existence, Knowledge, and Infinity. These, however, are not attributes of the Absolute, they are rather the Absolute itself; they do not define the Absolute in the ordinary sense of the term 'definition.' Because definition which is always through generic unity and specific difference cannot be applied to what is not a finite thing among other finite things, like the blue lotus. Yet just as Space (*ākāśa*) may be indirectly indicated by giving its peculiarity, when *e.g.*, it is said that the space is what gives room, the *Brahman* also may be defined in this sense by the three indicative terms. These three indicative epithets, it is said as a warning against possible misinterpretations, are not to be taken as three distinct categories; they do not indicate the Absolute when taken severally, but they can indicate it only "by virtue of their combined connotation in which the meaning of each controls, and is controlled by, the meaning of the other."<sup>17</sup> That is, though each of these categories is ordinarily used independently of the other, yet, they, when used in their combined connotation, may differentiate the Absolute from all

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<sup>17</sup> *Evam satyādisabdā itaretarasaṁnidhāvanyonyanyāmyanyāmakā santah—loc. cit.*

finite things, like the blue lotus. It is true that the Absolute is indescribable; but, in spite of this, it may be indirectly described by using the highest categories of thought when the latter are not taken in their individual meanings.

We do not intend to discuss here how far Śaṅkara's interpretation of the agnostic tendency of some of the expressions of the Upaniṣads is more or less true than that of the other non-advaita thinkers, such as Rāmānuja; nor need we raise here the interesting problem of the comparative faithfulness of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja respectively to the philosophical significance of the *Vedānta Sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa. What is clear from the above explanations by Śaṅkara of the Upaniṣadic agnosticism is that he was not an agnostic in the same sense as Kant or Spencer. And a little exposition of his contentions will show the profundity of his philosophical insight as well as the baselessness of the common charge that his absolutism offers no aid for any new interpretation of experience.

Being, like knowledge, is foundational; it is as meaningless to deny existence or being, as to refute consciousness or knowing. The attempt to contrast being with non-being presupposes the existence of non-being, much as the attempt to contrast knowledge with ignorance presupposes that ignorance is known. In this sense, being is as irrepressible a category as con-

sciousness. Even illusions and dreams exist, and if these are unreal, the very contrast between the real and the unreal would be impracticable without their common basis in the category of being. A real appearance, that is, can be distinguished from an illusory or mere appearance, like the dream-experience, only in so far as the category of being is immanent in both. Being in this sense "is the root of the universe, and all these creatures—movable and immovable—have their root in Being; and not only have they their root in Being, but during their continuance too, they reside in Being, much as apart from the clay, the jar does not exist."<sup>18</sup> It is true that the dream-experiences are unreal in comparison with our waking experience, "the objects perceived in dreams are false for the awakened man," but "the falsity is not by itself, but only in comparison with waking cognition." Even when some experiences are condemned as false, they are false "only in their character of specific forms; in their character of pure Being, these too are true."<sup>19</sup>

Modern thought is already familiar with such arguments. Green, for instance, remarks that "the illusive appearance, as opposed to the reality, of any event is what *that* event really is not; but at the same

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<sup>18</sup> Śaṅkara's *Commentary on the Ch. Up.* VI. 8. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII. 5. 4.

time it really is something.”<sup>20</sup> Green, therefore, warns against the crude logic of Plato in supposing that there are objects which stand in the same relation to ignorance as to knowledge, and other objects which stand in a corresponding relation to mere opinion; the distinction of the real from the unreal is, therefore, “a distinction between one particular reality and another.”<sup>21</sup> It is true that “we may confuse the two kinds of object. We may take what is really of the one kind to be really of the other. But this is not a confusion of the real with the unreal. The very confusion itself, the mistake of supposing what is related in one way to be related in another, has its own reality. It has its history, its place in the development of a man’s mind, its causes and effects; and, as so determined, it is as real as anything else.” It is thus in vain, concludes Green, “that we seek to define the real by finding, either in the work of the mind or elsewhere, an unreal to which it may be opposed.” All things, in the language of Śaṅkara, are in this sense rooted in being, have their cause in being, and rest on and reside in being.<sup>22</sup>

In view of this foundational character of Being which is emphasised by Śaṅkara, it will be surely doing

<sup>20</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> They are *sanmūlāḥ*, *sathāranāḥ*, *sadāyatanāḥ*, and *sadāśrayāḥ*—*Com on the Ch. Up.* VI. 8. 4.

a grave injustice to him to say that both Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna strike on the same rock, as both "explain experience in such a way that the experience to be explained has no longer any reality."<sup>23</sup> But, continues Mr Thomas, though experience has to be denied explicitly, "yet the experience itself is the basis of the negative conclusion." The real difference between Śaṅkara and Nāgārjuna or Candrakīrti has been rightly emphasised by Dr. Das Gupta, in so far as he points out that, for Nāgārjuna, the appearance of the world "is like the appearance of mirages or dreams which have no reality of their own, but still present an objective appearance of reality."<sup>24</sup> Though the world, according to Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti, has only a relative truth, yet "there is no reality on which these appearances rest or are imposed." But Śaṅkara differed from the Buddhists at this place: both Gaudapāda and Śaṅkara think that "even false creations must have some basis in truth."<sup>25</sup> If then the originality of Śaṅkara consisted in this "fundamental doctrine" that "there was one reality, the Brahman," this, we believe, was no mean originality, as Dr. Das Gupta seems to think.<sup>26</sup> The compre-

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<sup>23</sup> Mr. E. J. Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought*, p. 256.

<sup>24</sup> *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II. p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Indian Idealism*, p. 195

hension of the foundational character of Being is one of the greatest achievements of modern idealism, Being, as rightly urged by Hegel, is immanent in all other categories, however poor and indeterminate it might be in comparison with the other categories. In spite of their fundamental differences in other respects, Śaṅkara and Hegel are so far in agreement with each other that Being is the most irrepressible category of all things.

The foundational character of Being is contrasted in another context with the concept of being in the other systems of philosophy. Existence or Being, it is urged, is pure, subtle, undefinable, all-pervading, one, taintless, indivisible, knowledge.<sup>27</sup> It is not a class-concept, as held by the Vaiśeṣika thinkers. It is true that they accept being as a class-concept pervading substances, qualities, actions, etc. But they miss the foundational character of Being inasmuch as they accept a doctrine of causation according to which every effect is a new creation which did not exist in the cause. Such a view of causation (known technically as the *asatkāryavāda*), to explain Śaṅkara's meaning, arises out of the confusion between the ultimate presupposition of all knowable things and the empirical concept of being. "Nor do they admit of the reality of a single Being." In other words, the

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<sup>27</sup> *Com. on the Ch. Up.* VI. 2. 1.



category of being, as a universal, must be one, while the empirical concept of being, as a class-concept, is abstracted from the actually perceived things.

Again, the Naiyāyikas hold that "the reality is both being and non-being," one being the contradictory of the other; while the Buddhists do not admit of any other reality except the negation of being. Śāṅkara's criticism of the Buddhistic doctrine of pure negation brings out clearly the meaning of his theory of foundational being. "If the nihilists contend that prior to creation, there was a mere negation of being, how is it that they speak of it as *existing* prior to creation, and being one only, without a second, asserting thereby its relations with time and number?" Again, the theory of pure negation would amount to the denial of "the existence of the theoriser himself." It may no doubt be retorted that all apparent beings are due to a mistake (*saṃvṛti*); but "what is this *mistake* itself? Is it an entity or a non-entity?" If the mistake be a non-entity, its existence cannot be proved by any example. So it must be admitted that "the fact of Being never ceases." And even when it is said that the *idea* of the clay is the cause of the *idea* of the jar (*e.g.*, by the Buddhist idealists), it must be admitted that "only an *existing* idea of clay is the cause of the *existing* idea of the jar. Being in this sense is an ultimate category, and even an effect coming out of a cause must so far be called "being in another form,"

much as the different things produced from the clay, though differing among themselves, are yet "the same in respect of the clay."

Thus, to put it briefly, the category of being is an ultimate and universal category presupposed by all conceivable things, including the concepts of substance, attribute, cause, effect, idea, illusion, and error. The Absolute, therefore, far from being a transcendent Principle out of all relation to the world of our experience, is immanent through and through in all that exists. It is not a mere class-concept, nor is it an empirical concept limited in its application to one group of things to the exclusion of another group. It is the immanent principle which is so foundational that no conceivable entity can stand without it. Some of the problems which arise here must be considered below. Meanwhile, it will be useful to consider Śaṅkara's doctrine of the Absolute as Infinite.

Infinity, for Śaṅkara, is three-fold; namely. infinity in respect of time, infinity in respect of space, and infinity in respect of substance. A finite thing may be either limited in time, or limited in space, or, again, it may be limited by the existence of something external to itself. The Absolute, on the contrary, is neither limited in space or time nor by something distinct from itself. Hence, the infinity of the Self is the highest type of infinity, and its truth is the highest

truth.<sup>8</sup> Space, for example, has a kind of infinity, in so far as all particular spaces are within one unlimited space; but it cannot be called infinite in respect of time and substance. (*Natu kālataśca ānanyam vastutaśca ākāśasya.*) The infinity of the Absolute is, therefore, not like the spatial infinity. A finite thing, on the other hand, is always limited by the existence of things different from itself. (*Bhinnaṃ hi vastu vastrantarasyānto bhavati.*) "It is the existence of a thing different from a given thing that limits the latter." Every object of thought is limited by that other object from which thought turns away; as, for instance, "our knowledge of the cow is reflected away from our knowledge of the horse, and consequently the concept of cow is limited by the concept of horse." Such limitations are not applicable to the Absolute.

From these explanations of the nature of the Absolute, as offered by Śaṅkara, arises a rather puzzling question which is not brought to the prominence it deserves in modern philosophy. That each category has implicit in it an 'other' is a recognised tenet of modern absolutism. It is also admitted that the objects that are opposed to each other presuppose a common basis or unity underlying

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<sup>8</sup> *Ata niratiśayam ātmana ānanyam*, and it has *niratiśayasatyatvam*—*Com. on the Tat. Up. loc. cit.*

the opposition. But do these rules of determinate knowledge apply to the Absolute? Here we arrive at the parting of the way between modern absolutism and its earlier type. For the former, all knowledge, including the Absolute Experience, is a whole, a unity-in-difference. The Absolute, according to it, is a Spiritual Principle which expresses itself in the different parts, and not a bare identity that excludes all difference. The Infinite, therefore, is a concrete universal which manifests or realises itself in the finite individuals.

For Śaṅkara, on the contrary, the rules of determinate knowledge are inapplicable to the Absolute, because their application would mean that the Absolute has something different from itself belonging to a common genus with it, and that the Absolute has an attribute by which it is differentiated from the other 'something.' The ultimate unity, therefore, must be, for Śaṅkara, what J. Cook Wilson calls an undefinable universal. This position, however, develops another puzzle. "Words signify counter-realities in the objective world."<sup>29</sup> The discursive understanding (*Buddhi*) comprehends everything through specific relations of it to things different from itself. How can, then, the Absolute be even *named*? To name is to differentiate and delimit, but to delimit the Absolute

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<sup>29</sup> *Com. on the Ch. Up.* VI, 2. 1.

is to bring it under relations. We are thus caught on the horns of a dilemma. Either the Absolute is something that can be named and talked about; in this case, it cannot be absolutely beyond all relational categories. Or, it may be taken as being above all relations, an *ens absolute indeterminatum*, and as such, beyond all speech and thought, in that case, there can be no philosophical discourse about the Absolute, for, like Kant's Thing-in-itself, it can then neither be proved nor disproved.

The former alternative is accepted by many modern absolutists, while the latter has been favoured by some Buddhist absolutists. The modern idealists, in spite of their internal differences, draw their inspiration from the Hegelian tenet that Pure Being is Pure Nothing, that is, existence, when divorced from character, is indistinguishable from a mere naught. The Absolute, therefore, it is insisted, must be in some sense a determinate Being. The Buddhist absolutists, on the other hand, found that whatever was determinate was relative, and, consequently, a determinate Absolute would be a relative Absolute which was a contradiction in terms. The result was that they condemned as futile all reasoned discourse on the Absolute. Not only this, but they sometimes gave themselves up to universal scepticism and declared that all logical or reasoned knowledge was altogether futile and purposeless, and if they them-

selves were drawn into a logical refutation of a given thesis, the reason was not that they had any definite position of their own, but because this was necessary for convincing an unwise public of the futility of all logical disquisitions. Thus, for instance, Candrakīrti, the distinguished exponent of Nāgārjuna, had to prescribe silence as the only wise course for a philosopher, and this might be taken as the *reductio ad absurdum* of extreme scepticism represented also by the Greek sceptic, Pyrrho.

The anti-agnostic tendency of Hegel, as well as the agnostic attitude of the Buddhist absolutists, despite their antithetical outlooks, have implicit in them a common assumption, namely, that everything which is real for us must be either determinate and definable or pure nothing. From this identical assumption, mutually contradictory conclusions are drawn by Hegel and Nāgārjuna respectively. The logical method is apotheosized by the former and anathematized by the latter; but both leave the initial assumption unquestioned and unchallenged.

The strength of Hegelian absolutism, as we have contended above, lies in its doctrine of the concrete universal. The empiricists supposed that whatever could not be known by the inductive and experimental method was neither real nor true; this attitude ended inevitably in scepticism. Over against this, it was rightly urged by Kant and the post-Kantian thinkers

that the universal, though not derivable from experience, was yet the indisputable background of all knowledge, including the knowledge of inductive origin. You cannot, for example, handle a universal law as you handle the stick or the brick-bat, but this does not warrant the conclusion that the law is less real than the stick. Similarly, the pattern according to which the parts of a watch are adjusted, the biological laws that govern the functions of a living body, or the mathematical principle that regulates the different sections of a hyperbola,—these are not less real than the parts they govern. To have raised thought from the world of mere particulars to that of the true universal must be considered as a great achievement of the post-Kantian idealists.

The strength of the Buddhist absolutists, on the other hand, lies in their insight into the conditions of discursive thinking. To think is to distinguish, and to know is to contrast; hence it is urged that those who are tied to words do not understand the Absolute Truth. All knowledge, according to them, is vitiated by the exigencies of language, which is always discriminative. Consequently, the pure *Garbha*, according to the Mahāyāna Buddhists, is like a pure gem concealed under a soiled garment, and this garment is linguistic knowledge.<sup>30</sup> The concepts of matter and

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., Suzuki, *Studies in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, p. 107.

mind, subject and object, phenomenon and noumenon, cause and effect, are grasped in mutual exclusion and correlativity; thus, relativity and conditionality (called *Śūnya* by the Mādhyamika Buddhist) are implicit in all our categories.

If, however, we look at Hegel with the eye of the Buddhist, and *vice versa*, it would appear that the only escape from the horns of the dilemma consists in challenging their common assumption that whatever is real must be either definable or pure nothing. No philosophy can be worth the name if it has to admit the suspension of all judgments to be the highest state of wisdom, and if logical thinking is to be substituted by purely mystic intuition. The modern absolutists, therefore, are here right over against the Buddhists. If the Absolute, which is variously called the *Tathatā*, the *Garbha*, or the *Dharmakāya*—has to be understood by a perfectly anti-logical method, all talks about the philosophical establishment of the Absolute are purely empty and meaningless. Even the so-called perfect knowledge (*pariniṣpannam jñānam*) would in that case reduce itself to an unmeaning word, because its meaning is understood only by contrasting it with imperfect knowledge (*parikalpita*); and if the latter is to be condemned as meaningless, the former cannot escape a similar disaster. In fact, philosophy cannot afford to abandon logical thinking. The Buddhists, on the other hand, are surely right, over against



Hegel, in their insight that the Absolute falls beyond relational categories. 'All our categories are shot through and through with relativity, and, consequently, to identify the Absolute with a category would be to deny in a roundabout way that there is an Absolute at all, because a relational Absolute is a contradiction in terms.

The whole difficulty is clearly envisaged by Śaṅkara in his expōsition of the Absolute by the following remarks. If the Absolute cannot be known as we know a lotus, then it might be objected that the definition of the Absolute as Existence, Consciousness, and Infinite, is as meaningless as the assertion that "having bathed in the waters of the mirage, crowned with a garland of sky-flowers, this son of the barren woman is going, armed with a bow made of a hare's horn."<sup>31</sup> But, replies Śaṅkara, the Absolute is not a meaningless naught, though it cannot be defined in the same way as the lotus: because the terms, such as existence, knowledge, etc., are not meaningless, and they retain their original meaning even when they are used for defining the Absolute. It is a mistake to suppose that "whatever is, is capable of being perceived through the medium of the senses by means of its peculiar attribute, such as, *e.g.*, a pot, and what is not so perceived is like the horn of a hare." The

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<sup>31</sup> *Com. on the Tait. Up. loc. cit.* .

Absolute being the presupposition of all finite and determinate things, including even such a thing as space, its reality cannot be denied.

What Śaṅkara is driving at is evidently this that the self *for* which all objects have a meaning, cannot be itself meaningless, though it cannot be defined in the same way in which a finite thing is defined; consciousness *to* which all objects are presented, cannot be meaningless, though it is not itself presented to something else, though, that is, it is not itself a presentation or an idea. To put it in a different way, the self is not a finite thing along with other finite things, and, consequently, it cannot be defined in accordance with the ordinary rule of definition which consists in distinguishing the thing defined from other things belonging to the same genus by means of its peculiar attributes.

The mistake of the Buddhists, it is now evident, lies in the assumption that whatever is not definable in the ordinary way is as unreal as the hare's horn; and, consequently, it is presumed by them that the Absolute, which cannot be defined *per genus et differentiam*, is as good as nothing for us, and has to be, therefore, apprehended through a type of mystical intuition. What is to be urged against such a view is that the rule of definition cannot be applied to the highest genus inasmuch as it cannot be brought under a higher unity, nor can it be differentiated from any

other correlative unities belonging along with it to a higher unity. But this does not reduce the highest unity to a mere nothing, it is rather the ultimate presupposition of all subordinate unities. In this respect, it has been rightly urged by Kant that the unity of consciousness, "which precedes any conception of combination," must not "be confused with the category of unity;" and, for an explanation of this qualitative unity, "we must go further back, and seek it in that which, as the ground of the unity of various conceptions in judgment, is implied in the possibility even of the logical use of understanding."<sup>32</sup> There is one conception, he contends in another context, "that we must now put along with the transcendental conceptions contained in the table of categories, but without in any way changing or adding to the table. This is the conception, or, if it is preferred, the judgment, 'I think.' It is easy to see, that 'I think' is the common vehicle of all conceptions, and therefore of transcendental as well as empirical conceptions. As the vehicle of transcendental conceptions it is itself transcendental, but it cannot claim a special place in the list of these transcendental conceptions, because it merely serves to indicate that all thought belongs to consciousness."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Watson's *Selections*, p. 64.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

All our categories, it is rightly seen by the Buddhists, are relational and conditional. Substance, attribute, cause, effect, etc., are correlative to one another; but this correlativity among the categories presupposes an ultimate unity which cannot be reduced to any one of these correlated categories. The categories of existence and knowledge are generally used in connection with the finite things and the fragmentary knowledge-events, and, as such, they are no doubt in perfect correlativity with the other things and the other knowledge-events from which they are differentiated. But the foundational existence and the foundational knowledge cannot be correlated with anything outside themselves. They are rather the ground of all correlated categories, and, consequently, undefinable yet undeniable. Whatever can be *named* has no doubt to be differentiated from things other than itself, but it cannot be urged that the ultimate and foundational principle itself must be differentiated from other things, because that would be to deny that it is foundational. In this sense, therefore, the ultimate principle is beyond speech and thought, and it may so far be rightly urged that all relational categories, such as, "existence or non-existence, one or many, conditioned or unconditioned, intelligent or dull, active or passive, fruitful or fruitless, produced or causeless, happy or miserable, inside or outside, negative or positive, distinct or non-distinct, are in-

applicable to the Absolute.”<sup>34</sup> But the difficulty of naming the Absolute can be removed when our ordinary categories are used, not in their individual and mutually exclusive meanings, but “in their combined connotation in which the meaning of each controls and is controlled by the meaning of the other.” In other words, the categories of existence, knowledge, and infinity, can indicate the Absolute, only when they are not used as relational categories, but as one single principle in which their relational meanings are merged.

It may be now seen that Bradley's doctrine of immediate experience, in spite of all that has been said against it, has an important value for working out a true theory of self. The “direct awareness” which is taken to be non-relational, must be recognised to be the ultimate presupposition of all relational

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<sup>34</sup> Śaṅkara's *Summary of the fourth chapter of the Ait. Up.* The only interpreter who has emphasised this aspect of Śaṅkara's position aright, as far as we know, is René Guénon. Some of his remarks on the Vedānta conception of Self are of invaluable importance for avoiding misinterpretations of the advaita doctrine. He has, for instance, rightly warned that when the Self is said to be the universal principle, “the distinction between the Universal and the individual must not be regarded as a correlation, since the second of these two terms, being strictly annulled in respect of the first, cannot in any way be opposed to it”—*L'Homme et son Devenir selon le Védānta*, English translation, p. 31.

knowledge. "A relation," he rightly remarks, "exists only between terms, and those terms, to be known as such, must be objects." Hence we cannot strictly speak "of a relation, between immediate experience and that which transcends it, except by a licence." It is no doubt necessary, while describing this direct awareness, to speak of it as that *for* which all objects exist; but "if all metaphors are to be pressed, then I, and I think all of us, in the end must keep silence." On some matters, it is necessary to use metaphors which, it is added almost in the language of Śaṅkara "conflict with and correct each other."<sup>35</sup> It is true that Bradley would not agree to use the term 'self' for this "direct awareness" or immediate experience, because he uses the terms 'self' as well as 'consciousness' in the relational sense. The Absolute, he urges, must not be called a self, or *vice versa*, because that would be "to postulate in the teeth of facts, facts which go to show that the self's character is gone when it ceases to be relative."<sup>36</sup> But this is after all a matter of terminology, and we have seen ample justification in the foregoing pages to find the real character of the self beyond all relations. And as a matter of fact he himself does not hesitate to use the term subject for immediate experience, only it is added that the

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<sup>35</sup> *Truth and Reality*, p. 196.

<sup>36</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 497.

subject is felt and as such neither itself nor its actual distinction from the object, can be got out and placed before it as an object."

So far as Bradley's theory of self and his doctrine of absolute experience is concerned, we need not enter here upon any detailed examination of them, as this has been done by many able critics, particularly by Dr. H. Haldar.<sup>37</sup> But we believe that Bradley's critics have not entirely succeeded in avoiding the mistake of throwing away the baby with the bath. It is unfortunate that Bradley should have used the same term 'feeling' for the sub-relational as well as for the ultra-relational experience. So far as the former is concerned, it is surely a hypothetical state, and, as such, there is ample room here for dispute. And it has been, as a matter of fact, a subject of heated controversy in Indian philosophy between the Naiyāyikas and the Buddhists (It is called *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* or *ālocana*.) But Bradley means by immediate experience, not only a stage that is transcended, but also the felt subject which is ever present at all the stages of experience, and in which there is no distinction between the experienced and the experience. The latter is the ultimate epistemological presupposition of all relational knowledge, like J

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<sup>37</sup> See his *Neo-Hegelianism*, pp. 247—256.

Ward's pure subject which, though last in the order of knowledge, is yet first in the order of existence. It is, in the language of Śaṅkara, *Vijñānaghana* in which there is no distinction between existence and knowledge. "He who would maintain that *Brahman* is characterised by thought different from existence, and at the same time by existence different from thought, would virtually maintain that there is a plurality in *Brahman*."<sup>38</sup> The truth is that in respect of the Absolute, existence is thought, and thought is existence. (*Sattaira bodho bodha eva ca sattā*) The Absolute, so characterised, is not a mere stage of experience which is *psychologically a priori* to the relational stage, but it is the *epistemologically a priori* principle presupposed by the relational experience.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *S. B.* III, 2. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Prof. Cunningham does little justice to this epistemological priority of immediate experience which Bradley intends to signify by his doctrine, though it must be admitted that the latter has made himself open to misinterpretations by the confused way in which he talks of the immediate experience in the epistemological as well as in the psychological senses. Relational expedience is self-contradictory, not because a non-relational whole is inconceivable, but because such an experience, when taken apart from immediate experience, leads to the contradiction of an infinite regress, as Bradley rightly contends. Apart from the self as *aparokṣa* and *śāpṛakṣa*, as put by Śaṅkara, a theory of self must lead to the perplexities of the *Naiyāyikas* whose doctrine of infinite *anuvyavasāyas* has ever remained as a sad commentary on their logical insight and analytic accomplishments.



It is of course very misleading to say that thought seeks its satisfaction in an immediate experience in entering which thought commits suicide and where it would be present as a higher intuition.<sup>40</sup> The undeniable fact is that thought wants consistency, it has always a *nisus* to a systematic whole. Equally unquestionable is its essentially discursive nature; nothing can be thought of, which cannot be distinguished from its 'other.' But, then, it must also be taken as incontrovertible that "I think" is the presupposition of all discursive thinking; that is, I can distinguish between two given terms, only because I am not myself one of the terms that are distinguished. The distinction of 'a' from 'b' has a meaning for me, only because I am the common presupposition of both, and, as such, not identifiable with any one of them. The perplexities provoked by Bradley's doctrine of immediate experience are certainly due, at least partly, to his use of the terms 'self' and 'consciousness' in the relational sense, and his consequent belief that the self is nothing more than an appearance and consciousness is not something original. He should have seen a little more clearly why his fellow-idealists had insisted that the self was the ultimate presupposition of all known and knowable things. If the Absolute is neither a self nor a conscious principle, it cannot

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<sup>40</sup> Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 152.

surely be distinguished from Kant's 'Thing-in-itself,' in spite of all the efforts Bradley has made in that direction.

But, none the less, he was certainly right in emphasising the need of an immediate experience for a systematic philosophy. Consistency requires that the relation of distinction presupposes a common principle that cannot be reduced to any of the terms distinguished. Even the relation of one particular to another is not equivalent to the relation of the particulars to the universal. And when one universal is distinguished from another universal, this relation between two universals cannot be identical with the relation in which both stand to the foundational principle which is their common presupposition. In other words, all distinctions are between objects and objects, and if we speak of the distinction between the conscious subject and the objects we should at least guard ourselves against identifying this relation with any relation between one object and another. The 'I think,' in other words, is the presupposition of all relational categories, and, therefore, as Kant puts it, this conception does not add to the list of the categories through which the objects exist for us.

Some remarks of Prof. Gentile are so pertinent to the subject under discussion that they may bear a reference here. We must not, he insists, put together the unity of mind with the multiplicity of things,

because "the multiplicity of things does not stand in the same rank with the unity of the ego, for multiplicity belongs to things in so far as all together are gathered into the unity of consciousness."<sup>41</sup> It is, therefore, contended that the unity of mind which lives in the immediate intuition of the spiritual life is "unmultipliable and infinite unity."<sup>42</sup> Determinateness is "essentially and fundamentally multiplicity, it is the particularity of the determinations by which each is what it is, and reciprocally excludes the others." The unity of the mind, on the other hand, "is infinite;" it cannot be "limited by other realities and still keep its own reality. Its unity implies its infinity. The mind is not a multiplicity; nor is the whole, of which it is a part, multiple, the part being a unity." The conclusion which he draws is: "A unique and infinite thing would not be knowable, because to know is to distinguish one thing from another. *Omnis determinatio est negatio.*"

As the conception of the Infinite is one of the most interesting subjects upon which modern speculations are still divided, a student of the advaita philosophy will naturally feel encouraged to find in Prof. Gentile's contentions an unconscious corroboration by a modern thinker of the advaita theory of self as

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<sup>41</sup> *Mind as Pure Act.* p. 32.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

infinite. The self, as we have seen above, is unlike the finite things which are necessarily determined from outside. Being the ultimate presupposition of all finite things, the self cannot be limited by something other than itself. It is well known, remarks Śaṅkara, that 'that is infinite which cannot be divided from anything else, and if the Absolute be a knowing agent, then, it is divided from knowledge and the knowable object, and, as such, cannot be infinite.'<sup>43</sup> The Absolute, therefore, is Knowledge *within* which there is no distinction. The Infinite, it is said in another context, is that "where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else."<sup>44</sup> The finite, on the contrary, is that "where one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else." The infinite (*bhūmā*), as put elsewhere, 'is something quite different from all notions of duality.'<sup>45</sup> It being the presupposition of all known and knowable things, the Infinite may be said to "rest in its own greatness," or, to put it more strictly, "the Infinite is without any resting place or support." All objects, that is, presuppose the Absolute Self, though the latter has no presupposition.

It does not matter much whether the ultimate presupposition of all knowledge is called the conscious

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<sup>43</sup> *Com. on the Tat. Up. Brahmapallī.*

<sup>44</sup> *S. B. I. 3. 8.*

<sup>45</sup> *Com. on the Ch. Up. VII. 24. 1.*

subject, or the unity of mind, or the pure ego, provided it is remembered that it is not itself either one thing among other things or one category among other categories. Without such a foundational principle, every analysis of knowledge will be confronted by the paradox of infinite regress. When, therefore, the ultimate principle is described even as a universal, we must guard ourselves against interpreting this ground-universal in the sense in which a universal is correlative with a particular. Similarly, again, when it is described as immediate experience, we must with equal care avoid the mistake of thinking that immediate experience is one type of experience by the side of all other types of experience. So far Bradley is altogether right in his remark that even the term 'for' has only a metaphorical significance when all relational knowledge is said to be *for* immediate experience. All criticisms directed against the doctrine of immediate experience, in so far as they start with the assumption that the relation of this experience to the objects is identical with an inter-objective relation, must be altogether irrelevant.

The Buddhistic agnosticism, as we have remarked above, arose out of drawing from a true premise a false conclusion. It is certainly true that all our categories are relational and so far finite. But this circumstance by itself does not guarantee the conclusion that the Absolute falls altogether beyond the

limits of human comprehension. If it is true that the principle of relativity is called upon by the nihilists in order to destroy all theories and to replace them by "direct mystic intuition," as we are told by Dr. Th. Stcherbatsky,<sup>46</sup> then it must be said, in the words of E. Caird, that if the philosopher assumes prophetic airs or speaks to ordinary men from the height of 'an immediate insight' or 'transcendental intuition,' from which they are excluded, then, he is pretending "to be of a different species from other men" and is so far "trampling the roots of humanity under foot."<sup>47</sup>

The confusion between Śaṅkara's absolutism and the Buddhistic agnosticism must, it should be emphasised once more, be avoided by every sympathetic interpreter of the advaita philosophy. Yet this confusion was started by no less an authority than Paul Deussen who has done so much for the spread of the Vedānta teachings. And since then this confusion has remained unchallenged, and the subsequent interpreters of Śaṅkara's philosophy have implicitly accepted his interpretation. Recollecting the phenomenalism of Kant, Deussen remarks that the "central thought" of the Vedānta consists in this that the *Brāhman* is "theoretically unknowable; because in all knowing, it is the knowing subject, it can never be an object of

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<sup>46</sup> *Nirvāṇa*, p. 49.

<sup>47</sup> *Hegel*, p. 57.

knowledge for us. It must, therefore, be grasped practically."<sup>48</sup> We need not here examine Deussen's criticism of "the weakness and frailty of man's intellect" that, according to him, is shared by Śaṅkara with the Greek and modern philosophers in so far as Śaṅkara, like Descartes, could not "go so far" as to see that what remains of the self when all notions of the not-self are withdrawn from it is, not consciousness, but something unconscious.<sup>49</sup> What is suggested here is evidently this that it is the Will and not consciousness which is more fundamental than the other. Such an interpretation, as we have contended in the last chapter, would put Śaṅkara's position in an extremely misleading light. There is an important sense in which consciousness is the ultimate presupposition of all fragmentary and relative experiences

But what should be challenged in the present context is Deussen's assimilation of Śaṅkara's position to that of Kant. The real value of Kant's contribution to a sound theory of knowledge consists in his insistence that the categories are the logical presuppositions of all objects that we know. But his theory of an unknowable and inconceivable Thing-in-itself has been rightly rejected by all subsequent idealists from Fichte to Bradley. In this respect

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<sup>48</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 143.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Kant's position is more akin to that of Candrakīrti and other Buddhist agnostics than to the position of Śaṅkara. The Absolute, for Śaṅkara, is our very self which none can deny; it is the pre-established ground (*svayamsiddha*) of all proof and disproof, though it cannot be known in the same way in which an object is known. The Absolute is like the light which manifests all objects, and which, consequently, does not require another light for its own revelation. To contend, therefore, that there can be no theoretical knowledge of the Absolute, as it is contended by Deussen, would be as absurd as the assertion that light cannot be known theoretically because it illumines the objects while it itself is not revealed by another light.

These thoughts are put very clearly in the commentary on the Gītā. How can there be, it is asked, a cognition of the Absolute Self? How is the constant meditation of self-knowledge possible if the self as well as knowledge be formless? The answer runs as follows:—

There is a sense in which it is unnecessary to impart the knowledge of the self, because it is invariably comprehended in association with all objects of perception. The *Brahman*, though eminently evident, intimately known, very near, and essentially the self, appears to the indiscriminating people as obscure, difficult to know, remote, and different from the self.



But to those whose intellect (*Buddhi*) has been withdrawn from the external things, there can be nothing so blissful, so evident, so easily comprehensible, and so near.<sup>50</sup> All that is necessary, therefore, for knowing the real self is to avoid its false identification with the pseudo-egos, such as, the intellect, mind, body, etc. It is only some self-conceited thinkers who suppose that the intellect cannot comprehend the self on account of its being formless. In reality, however, "the self is not a thing unknown to anybody at any time, it is not a thing to be reached, or abandoned, or acquired. If the self be unknown, all actions for the attainment of an object would be meaningless." Knowledge, though formless, must be admitted to be as immediate as pleasure, since objects are apprehended because of the reality of knowledge.<sup>51</sup>

Deussen's misinterpretation of Śaṅkara's theory of Self on the agnostic lines seems to be due to the fact that he construes such phrases as "not knowable as an object," and "unknown as an object," as equivalents of "entirely inconceivable and unknowable." But this would surely be a mistake; and in fact, Śaṅkara anticipates such a confusion of his theory of the Absolute with the agnostic position, and

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<sup>50</sup> *Sukham, suprasiddham, suvijñeyam, āsannam*.—*Com. on the Gītā* XVIII, 50.

<sup>51</sup> *Jñānavasēnava jñeyamavagatī iti jñānam atyantam prasiddham sukhādvadēra*—*loc. cit. Cp. also Ibid.* II, 18.

often carefully distinguishes between the two. It is true, he says, that the Absolute transcends all speech and thought, but it "certainly does not mean that *Brahman* is a mere naught."<sup>52</sup> The negative judgment has no meaning apart from a positive background. Consequently, all that the *Bṛh. Up.* means by the negative description of the Absolute is this that it does not fall within the category of object (*aviśayāntahpātī*); for, it is "the innermost self whose nature is eternal, pure and eternally free consciousness."

Indeed, the assertion that the Absolute is theoretically incomprehensible would be as absurd as that there can be no theoretical knowledge of space on the ground that all spaces that are ever known are limited spaces, or that light is theoretically unknowable because what is known directly is an illumined object. The truth, on the contrary, is that our knowledge of particular spaces and that of illumined objects presuppose the reality of an infinite space and of the source of illumination respectively. Similarly, the foundational consciousness which is presupposed by all particular conscious activities cannot be itself said to be a mere naught for our thought. The Absolute, in this sense, far from being entirely unknowable, is knowable *par excellence*.

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<sup>52</sup> *S. B.* III. 2. 22.

In interpreting the advaita system, it is of primary importance to remember that this particular philosophy is not a mere speculative adventure of purely theoretical interest. On the contrary, it is a practical discipline designed for the attainment of what its founders considered to be the highest state of spiritual evolution. This highest stage was supposed by them to be realised through three stages, known technically as *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsa*, each stage being as indispensable as the rest. Misconceptions, therefore, are surely to arise when one of them is taken to be unnecessary, when, for instance, it is said that Śaṅkara fares entirely without logic and has no other evidence for his conclusions than an appeal to the Upaniṣads. It is an equally serious error to think that the highest stage of spiritual realisation, according to Śaṅkara, can be attained without a theoretically satisfactory philosophy of the Absolute. That would be to ignore the importance of the second stage of reasoned knowledge. The fact is that a theoretically satisfactory position reached by refuting all rival theories which excite doubts and suspicions in the mind is an indispensable preliminary to the attainment of the last stage of self-realisation. This, according to Śaṅkara, cannot be attained by the absurd method of proving the incompetency of thought by means of thought itself, as Bradley, for instance, supposed. The anti-rational and sceptical attitude

may breed despair, but cannot be a necessary stage in a spiritual discipline.

Śaṅkara's method of knowledge, we believe, is more correctly analysed by another distinguished exponent of mysticism than what is offered by Deussen. In comparing the method of Śaṅkara with that of Eckhart, it is remarked by Prof. Rudolf Otto that their mysticism is "no mysticism in the usual sense of the term."<sup>53</sup> Theirs is the method of an "intellectual and not of an emotional mysticism." Both of them seek to give "a knowledge which is to be translated into a comprehensible doctrine with all the aids of proof, scholarly presentation and keen dialectic."<sup>54</sup> But even Prof. Otto seems sometimes to underestimate the contribution of Śaṅkara to a philosophical interpretation of experience, when, for instance, it is remarked that the "intuitus mysticus" is "a first-hand and immediate fact and possession of the mystical mind" in the case of Śaṅkara as well as Eckhart. So far as the former is concerned, we believe, we have been able to show clearly in the foregoing pages that Śaṅkara's works are full of illuminating analysis of knowledge which will be acceptable to all, and not simply to the mystical minds. The discovery of the *a priori* conditions of knowledge does

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<sup>53</sup> *Mysticism, East and West*, p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

not certainly require a mystical mind, otherwise we shall have to admit that all the philosophers from Kant to Hegel and the modern absolutists are mystics. There is no doubt a place for mysticism in Śaṅkara's doctrine of self-realisation; but his theory of knowledge, we believe, is free from any mystical element. Reasoned knowledge is an indispensable stage in the advaita method of self-realisation; and no reasoned refutation of rival doctrines can be promoted by an appeal to mystical intuition.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that Śaṅkara's doctrine of the Absolute Self is based on an analysis of experience, and, as such, it is different from the agnostic method of the Buddhists. The self, when rightly understood, is an undefinable, yet perfectly intelligible, principle presupposed by all experience. It is, in other words, consciousness, the peculiar character of which is that here there is no distinction between the experienced and the experiencing. In fact, the whole of Śaṅkara's discussions on the Self may be viewed as an able and comprehensive analysis of *consciousness*.

It will be interesting here to add a few remarks on the place of the negative dialectic method in the development of the advaita philosophy,—a method which has been recently introduced into modern thought by Bradley. A short comparison between Bradley, Nāgārjuna and Śaṅkara may remove what

seems to us another misapprehension of the method of Śaṅkara which has particularly led to the belief that the Absolute in the advaita philosophy is a transcendent principle.

Bradley starts his destructive criticism of all appearances in the spirit of Nāgārjuna, which was wrongly infused into Śaṅkara's philosophy by Śrīharṣa at a later age. But while following the same dialectic method, Bradley tried to steer clear of Nāgārjuna's agnosticism by means of the Hegelian doctrine of degrees in truth and reality. But, as has been rightly contended by Dr. Haldar, he has failed to bring this doctrine into accord with his destructive criticism.<sup>55</sup> His transition from appearance to the Absolute is so abrupt that it "takes one's breath away, and savours too much of the incomprehensible process by which the mystic is transported beyond the region of ordinary experience"<sup>56</sup> In fact, the mere negative criticism of all the categories of thought must lead inevitably to Nāgārjuna's agnosticism which is equivalent to universal scepticism, and so the Absolute which emerges out of such a negative method must emerge abruptly; and, consequently, Nāgārjuna's *Dharma-kāya* as well as Bradley's Absolute must have the

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<sup>55</sup> *Neo-Hegelianism*, p. 250.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

appearance of as put by Dr Haldar in respect of the latter, being "shot out of a pistol."<sup>57</sup>

We must, therefore, be on our guard when it is remarked that there is a great "family likeness between the dialectical method of Hegel and Nāgārjuna's dialectics."<sup>58</sup> The truth is that this family likeness exists between the dialectic method of Bradley and that of Nāgārjuna, and neither Śaṅkara nor Hegel would subscribe to the position of universal scepticism which follows necessarily from the method of the former. A category, for Hegel, as we have remarked elsewhere, "is no doubt self-discrepant, but this is due to its forced abstraction from the higher category in which the inconsistencies of the lower category are reconciled. For Bradley, on the other hand, every category of knowledge can give us only appearance, and in this regard, one category is as bad as another."<sup>59</sup> And in transplanting the Buddhistic dialectic method on the advaita soil,—which process really began as early as the beginning of the ninth century with Maṇḍana Miśra, and was completed by Ānandajñāna, Śrīharṣa and Citsukha—the advaita dialecticians have put Śaṅkara's position in an extremely misleading light. Śaṅkara, as we have

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 249.

<sup>58</sup> Dr. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Nirvāṇa*, p. 53.

<sup>59</sup> See *infra*, Appendix A.

seen, is very definite in his polemic against absolute nihilism. Being, for him, is the most fundamental category, and the world of appearance, howsoever unreal, does not militate against the possibility of a systematic philosophy. The entire complex of phenomenal existence, he admits, is true in a certain sense, and so far there "is no reason why the ordinary course of secular and religious activity should not hold undisturbed."<sup>60</sup> The negative dialectic of the Buddhists, on the contrary, is entirely incompatible with any fixed criterion of truth and reality. Nāgārjuna, it has been rightly urged by M. Anesaki, pursued the negative dialectic "till he reached a complete denial of any definite thought about anything."<sup>61</sup> If then Śrīharṣa fell a prey to the allurements of negative dialectic, he really did a great disservice to Śaṅkara's position by ignoring the fact that the latter had great respect for reasoned knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

It was this incompatibility of the negative dialectic with the genuinely advaita position which was responsible, at least partly, for Śaṅkara's silence over his indebtedness to the Buddhist thought; his silence

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<sup>60</sup> *S. B.* II. 1. 14.

<sup>61</sup> *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV, p. 838.

<sup>62</sup> It is a pity that many modern interpreters of Śaṅkara have the tendency to make him consistent by reading into his position the thoughts of his followers who made the mistake of thinking that the position of Śaṅkara could be developed by the Buddhistic method of criticism.



cannot be attributed entirely to "sectarian animosity" or "extreme hatred," as Dr. Th. Stcherbatsky seems to suppose.<sup>63</sup> And if Śrīharṣa acknowledged his indebtedness, that was because he was actually influenced by the Buddhistic speculations to a degree which was not in harmony with the position of Śaṅkara. While Śrīharṣa thinks that the Absolute can be well established by a negative criticism of all categories and declaring, like Candrakīrti, that he has no particular thesis to prove in respect of the phenomenal world, Śaṅkara begins with the declaration that the object of the Vedānta is to furnish a positive proof for the identity of the individual and the Absolute Self. Such a positive proof would be impossible if he had started with the attitude of universal scepticism. Nor does it appear to be a mere irony that is responsible for Śaṅkara's polemic against the nihilists, as suggested by Prof. S. Radhakrishnan.<sup>64</sup> If we follow the interpretation of Nāgārjuna as offered by Candrakīrti as distinct from what is offered by other Buddhists, such as, Bhāvaviveka then, the term '*śūnya*' cannot be identified with Śaṅkara's empirical existence. The world of appearance, for Śaṅkara, is not entirely false. Being is immanent in the world of appearance. On

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<sup>63</sup> *Buddhist Logic*, Vol. I, p. 22.

<sup>64</sup> *Indian Philosophy* I, p. 669.

the contrary, Nāgārjuna's conception does not leave any reality for the phenomenal world which, for him, is as unreal as the horn of a hare.<sup>65</sup>

It is true that the Madhyamaka philosophers employ many terms (such as, *nirvikalpa*, *nisprapañca*, *vyavahāra*, *paramārtha*, etc.), that are also used by Śāṅkara. But they are used by the latter with very important changes in their connotations. The Absolute, according to Candrakīrti, for instance, repels all predicates, including those of being and non-being; and Candrakīrti complains that his position should have been taken to be identical with the doctrine of non-being.<sup>66</sup> But the difficulty is that such an Absolute can neither be refuted nor established; and we cannot be said to advance a single step in the way of establishing the truth of the Absolute by raising it entirely above all categories. Śāṅkara's Absolute, on the other hand, as we have seen, is not such a transcendent principle, though it is not definable in the ordinary way; and he seeks to prove its reality by a careful analysis of knowledge and experience.

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<sup>65</sup> This distinction has been accentuated rightly by many, such as, Poussin in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1910, p. 129, and Prof A. B. Keith in his *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 261.

<sup>66</sup> *Mūla-Madhyamaka-Kārikās*, ed. by Poussin, p. 499.

Absolutism has been one of the most persistent tendencies of philosophical thought in all ages and countries. In India, it had for its able exponents a large number of thinkers since the time of the Upaniṣads, if not earlier. But the types of absolutism have been as various as the types of God taught by different religions. These different types have arisen out of the different degrees of emphasis which its exponents have laid on the element of unity or that of difference in their respective theories. In India particularly, it led to the birth of multitudinous types of absolutism with conflicting tendencies and implications. Śaṅkara himself refers to certain important types associated with the names of Jaimini, Yājñavalkya, Āśmarathya, Auḍulomi, Kāśakṛtsna, and others; and these have been revived later on by Bhāskara, Rāmānuja, Mādhva, Śrījīva Gosvāmi, and many others in different forms and with different implications. Even today, the types of absolutism defended in America, England, Italy, and India are as different from each other as those expounded by the earlier absolutists. Anything like an exhaustive and critical survey of these conflicting types is neither

necessary here nor possible within the limits of the present work. Yet, the absolutism advocated in these pages will surely gain in clearness if a short reference is made to the vital differences between it and the Neo-Hegelian type of absolutism. The latter, as is well known, draws its inspiration from the Hegelian doctrine of the concrete universal which, as we have admitted above, signifies in spite of all that has been said against it, a very important improvement upon the earlier theories of knowledge.

The conclusion we have tried to defend in the foregoing pages may be summarised as follows. All knowledge and experience has for its ultimate implication an absolutely identical, eternal, infinite, un-objectifiable experience which may be called foundational consciousness. As un-objectifiable, it is not conformable to the categories according to which the objects are known, and in this sense alone it may be said to be beyond speech and thought. The mystics and agnostics, on the contrary, have raised the Absolute entirely beyond the pale of our ordinary knowledge, and which, consequently, cannot serve as an explanatory principle of human knowledge and experience. The Absolute that may be of any use for interpreting ordinary experience must be an immanent principle, and not the denizen of an alien world like the world of Plato's ideas. Such a transcendent principle may no doubt survive all destructive missiles

of critical thought, like the gossamer floating calmly in the upper layer of the atmosphere; but it explains nothing of any importance for our every-day life. An immanent Absolute, on the other hand, may at least be shown to be the ultimate logical implicate of experience, in the same way in which the logical categories have been proved by Kant and Hegel to be the *a priori* presuppositions of all objects of experience.

As it is not conformable to the forms or modes in which the objects exist and are known, the Absolute is undefinable in the ordinary sense of the word. It may so far be called either an undefinable universal, or the ground-category which annuls the correlativity of the relational categories, including that of the universal and the particular. It is, therefore, best described *negatively*, by denying of it all the predicates that are attributed to the objects. *Positively*, it may be described by the help of metaphors taken from the world of objects. It may, for example, be described as the cause or the creator of the universe, or it may be described as the light which reveals all things indifferently. But these positive descriptions are nothing more than metaphors derived from the world of objects designed for aiding the finite discursive intellect (*Buddhi*) to have a tolerably clear notion of what is essentially undefinable. The Absolute does not swallow up either matter or mind, God or man;

nothing is explained away or reduced to something other than itself; our religious activities and moral aspiration do not degrade themselves to mere illusions, simply on the ground that all things are rooted in the Absolute. To urge that my world would not exist if I had not existed is not to prove that the world I know is my ideas only. Similarly, to contend that the Absolute is the support of all things is not to prove that the latter are mere passing phases in the life-history of the former. In a word, the Absolute has no omnivorous instinct.

The picture of the Absolute, as portrayed here, is not apparently incompatible with Hegelian Absolutism. Green, as we have seen more than once, characterises the Absolute as an unconditioned conscious principle, or a principle of consciousness that is not itself determined by the relations by which the objects are determined. Similarly, Caird admits that the correlativity of the object and subject is a correlativity for the subject, and in this sense the self-overreaches the distinction between itself and its object. Self-consciousness, it is further urged, is like the light which reveals both itself and the darkness. Finally, Haldane's doctrine of foundational knowledge, as we have seen above, is a very close approach to the doctrine of Absolute Consciousness presupposed by all things and all distinctions. "Behind the fact of consciousness," it is admitted, "one cannot go"

It is our that of which we can only inquire into the 'what.'<sup>1</sup> He goes even so far as to say that "the appearances of myself, on which I am reflecting as facts, all fall within an experience which is single and indivisible, save through distinctions arising within my own reflection."<sup>2</sup> Experience, it is further held, "is not a property of a particular self but the foundation underlying all that is, implying a self that experiences. Object and subject are rather phases, distinguished by the activity of reflection, within a mental process that is single and indivisible."<sup>3</sup>

Coming nearer home, we find Dr. Haldar admitting that the Vedānta philosophy of India offers a true description of the Absolute.<sup>4</sup> It is an "eternally complete consciousness. Any lesser definition of it is self-contradictory, and raises anew all the difficulties for overcoming which the conception is framed." It is "indifferently Thought and Being;" it is "Thought which is Being, Being which is Thought." "The followers of Hegel," it is remarked in another context, "have rendered a great service to true philosophy by showing that all existence must be relative to the self. But, with the exception of Professor Edward Caird,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>4</sup> *Essays*, p. 55.

they have neglected to point out that the correlativity of the self and the world implies a higher and all-inclusive unity. This unity may, as we have seen, be called indifferently Thought or Being.''<sup>5</sup> In Hegel's system, "Thought as the subject of knowledge is the correlative of, and therefore opposed to, the object of knowledge. But this correlativity and opposition implies a unity which transcends the opposition. It is with Thought as the ultimate unity—the Absolute, that Hegel identifies Reality and not with it as the mere subject of knowledge.''"<sup>6</sup>

With such explicit pronouncements by some of the distinguished representatives of modern absolutism before us, it may seem difficult to distinguish between Hegelian absolutism and what we have sought to defend in these pages. Green accepts the notion of an unconditioned consciousness, Haldane admits that it is impossible to go beyond consciousness, and that all distinctions fall within an experience which is single and indivisible. Caird and Dr. Haldar are explicit on the Absolute being an ultimate unity which transcends the correlativity and opposition of subject and object, and Dr. Haldar particularly takes the Vedānta description of the Absolute to be its fittest description for us. What, then, is the real difference

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Neo-Hegelianism*, p. 472.



between our position and that of the Hegelian Absolutists?

The answer has been already anticipated partly in the last chapter. The fundamental difference between these two types of absolutism lies in this that while Hegelian absolutism will not tolerate immediate experience as a test of truth and reality, the central point in the doctrine of self which is expounded here consists in its emphasis on immediacy. Even J. Royce, the distinguished absolutist of America, who recognises in mysticism a definite philosophical attitude, rejects it as unsatisfactory for its unmediated immediacy. Consequently, the apparent similarity between the language of Hegelian absolutism with that of the advaita position must not be construed as a fundamental identity of views, though many interpreters of Śaṅkara have fallen into this mistake. Even Dr. Halder whose views are avowedly sympathetic towards the Vedānta philosophy will not depart from the Hegelian tradition that "the object is essentially related to the subject, and the subject is mediated by the consciousness of objects," and that the "Supreme Reality" is the "concrete universal—the 'Absolute'"<sup>7</sup> And so far as Hegel himself is concerned, it is but common knowledge that Reality, for him, is not to be found in the Indeterminate Being which is taken to be

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<sup>7</sup> *Essays*, p. 25.

indistinguishable from pure Nothing. He would perhaps accede to the anti-Spinozistic Reality as *omnimode determinatum*, which formed the cornerstone of the position of Christian Wolff, more readily than to an *ens absolute indeterminatum*.

The only modern absolutist who has tried to develop a doctrine of Reality through a combination of the doctrine of the concrete universal with immediate experience is F. H. Bradley, and he has failed utterly and unmistakably, and this ought to be taken as an important lesson by subsequent philosophers. The truth is that they are inherently irreconcilable.

The ultimate reason of this difference between Hegelian absolutism and the position suggested in these pages may perhaps be traced to a ruinous ambiguity in the term 'self-consciousness.' This term, as we have seen partly in a former chapter may be used at least in three different senses. It may either mean psychological introspection, or mediated consciousness of the self, or, again, it may signify the unobjectifiable immediate experience. According to the psychological attitude, the self may be known as an object, either through direct introspection or through inference. According to what we have called the epistemological attitude, the self is conscious of itself, not as an object, but as the subject which is mediated by the consciousness of objects. Lastly, we may mean by self-consciousness neither the conscious-

ness of the self as an object nor a mediated consciousness of the subject, but the fact of consciousness itself within which there is no distinction of knowledge from existence. Thus, though both the latter attitudes reject the psychological attitude to the problem of self as unsatisfactory, yet, the term 'self-consciousness' is used by them in two entirely different senses.

For appreciating this contrast and estimating the relative value of these two latter approaches to the problem of self, we must make a short reference here to the ambiguous way in which Kant used the term 'self-consciousness.' His analysis, as we have seen above, contains illuminating suggestions for a more satisfactory theory of self than the agnostic theory which he upholds in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. On the one hand, he insists that no knowledge of objects is possible without a pure, original, unchangeable consciousness which is called by him the transcendental apperception. This is the 'I think' which he takes to be a foundational unity distinct from the category of unity, and, as such, it does not add to the list of the categories. Kant sometimes uses the term 'self-consciousness' for indicating the original transcendental apperception, and it is then remarked from this standpoint that it is the common vehicle of all conceptions, and that this pure self-consciousness cannot be brought under the categories. "The subject no doubt thinks the categories, but that is no

reason for saying that it can have a conception of itself as an object of the categories."<sup>8</sup> Even the consciousness of time "has its origin" in the subject, and, consequently, the subject "cannot determine by means of that consciousness its own existence in time. no more can it determine itself as a mere thinking being by means of the categories."

On the other hand, Kant is at the same time anxious to insist that the self and the not-self, the subject and the object, are perfectly correlative with each other. From this standpoint, the self is not the presupposition of the consciousness of objects; it is rather the consciousness of the subject as mediated through, or reflected back from, the consciousness of the object. The *analytic* unity of apperception is, therefore, possible only under presupposition of a certain *synthetic* unity."<sup>9</sup> Hence, again, it is urged that the synthetic unity "is, therefore, the ground of that identity of apperception itself, which precedes *a priori* every definite act of thought."<sup>10</sup>

It is not necessary to expatiate on this ambiguity in Kant's exposition of self-consciousness, as it has been excellently brought out by Mr. H. A. Prichard. Kant's thought here, it is remarked rightly, "seems

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<sup>8</sup> *Watson's Selections*, p. 154.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>10</sup> *Loc. cit.*

to involve a circle. First the possibility of self-consciousness is deduced from the possibility of knowledge, and then the possibility of knowledge is deduced from the possibility of self-consciousness."<sup>11</sup> Mr Prichard must also be credited with a truer insight than that of many able exponents of Kant when he remarks: "Doubtless if I am to *be aware of myself* as the same in apprehending A and B, then, in coming to apprehend B, I must continue to apprehend A, and therefore must apprehend A and B as related; and such a consciousness on Kant's view involves a synthesis. But if I am merely to *be* the same subject which apprehends A and B, or rather if the apprehension of A and that of B are merely to *be* apprehensions on the part of one and the same subject, no such consciousness of A and B as related and, therefore, no synthesis is involved."<sup>12</sup>

What Mr. Prichard is driving at, as far as we understand him, is that the identity of apperception which is presupposed by all knowledge is not the *consciousness of that identity*. The latter is no doubt impossible without the consciousness of object, but the self may *be* identical without being conscious of its own identity. And this is also suggested by Kant himself when he is expounding the original, unchangeable,

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<sup>11</sup> *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, p. 191.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

transcendental apperception: but he always confuses this original unity of apperception with the synthetic unity of apperception, and once the confusion is there he takes the latter to be as original as the former. It seems that the discovery of the transcendental self at the basis of all experience came to Kant as a dazzling light which impaired his own vision; and the result was that his analysis of the status of the self in experience suffered from the inevitable imperfections of a man's sight who had just been couched of cataract in the eye.

From this fatal ambiguity in Kant's doctrine of apperception, philosophy might develop on two different lines. It might either emphasise his doctrine of transcendental apperception which was taken by him to be the presupposition of our consciousness of objects; or, it might accentuate his theory of correlativity of the self and the not-self by condemning his so-called analytic unity of apperception. In the history of post-Kantian idealism, we get a brilliant development of the latter aspect of Kant's teachings, while for an equally brilliant exposition of the former aspect of Kant's thought one may turn to the advaita philosophy of India. The doctrine of transcendental and pure consciousness is as old as the Upaniṣads, and Yājñavalkya was its first exponent; it was later on established on a secure basis by Śaṅkara and his followers.

The massive influence which Hegel's philosophy exercised and is still exercising on a large number of able thinkers, belonging to different ages and countries, has helped to keep Kant's confusion alive down to the present day. As a consequence, the doctrine of self as pure consciousness, though strongly suggested by the excellent analysis of experience for which we are indebted to the neo-Hegelian absolutists, is dismissed by them as the offspring of the fallacy of abstract identity. In expounding the conditions of what we have called the mediated self-consciousness, they have certainly exhibited an extraordinary power of critical analysis, and if modern thought is still clinging obstinately to the pre-Kantian and pre-Hegelian methods of self-cognition and reviving the antiquated and exploded theories of self, it is surely taking a definitely retrogressive step.<sup>13</sup>

But the mediated self-consciousness is not only conditioned by the consciousness of the object, but also by a pure conscious principle which is the presupposi-

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<sup>13</sup> When, for instance, Prof. John Laird insists on introspection as the right method of self-cognition in his *Problems of the Self*, and rejects the Hegelian dictum that the self is subject and not substance (p. 335), or when Hans Driesch seeks to find a "rightful place" for the soul, in *The Crisis in Psychology*, p. 155, and urges that the soul is to be inferred, one must inevitably be reminded of the false methods and conclusions of Vātsyāyana and Jayanta or of Udyotakara, that were subsequently revived by Locke and William James

tion of even the consciousness of objects. It would certainly be an unwarranted assumption to hold that the self comes to existence only when there is an 'I'-consciousness. On the contrary, both common-sense and logic demand that the self must exist first, in order that it may become self-conscious by the knowledge of objects with which it contrasts itself. In other words, the 'I' -consciousness, or *Ichheit*, presupposes an original conscious principle. The self must *be*, as put by Mr. Prichard, in order that it may become conscious of itself through the consciousness of the objects. In dreamless sleep, as we have already remarked, there is, for instance, no 'I' -consciousness, yet we cannot deny the existence of the self at that time. The self, it is admitted by Green, is an eternal principle which does not sleep, and he, as we have seen above, accuses Locke for not drawing this conclusion. But such an admission on the part of Green implies the necessity of distinguishing between the mediated self-consciousness (called *Ahaṅkāra* in the advaita system) and the eternal self. If, again it is admitted that the eternal self is the principle of consciousness itself, then, it must also be admitted that the principle of consciousness exists in deep sleep, though the 'I' -consciousness is absent at that time. Thus, the very logic of the idealistic analysis of experience points to a distinction which has been rather hastily rejected by the absolutists themselves.



Should we not therefore admit that in deep sleep there is a very near approach to the state of pure consciousness which is the prior condition of mediated self-consciousness? Green, we have seen, is very clear on the distinction between consciousness and sensibility or mind; if he had devoted a little more attention to the facts of dreamless sleep, it would be perhaps evident to him that what he called the modifications of sensibility were as much a necessary factor for mediated self-consciousness as a pure conscious principle.

A similar conclusion follows from the positions of E. Caird and Dr. Halldar. The correlativity of the subject and the object, it is admitted, implies a principle which transcends the opposition of the subject to the object. Dr. Halldar especially is very clear in insisting that the Absolute of Hegel is the ultimate unity which must not be identified with the mere subject of knowledge. Should we not, then, admit that the ultimate unity which is the presupposition of the correlativity cannot be one of the correlative terms? If the opposition of the subject to the object is transcended in the ultimate unity, the latter should be admitted to be a foundational unity which annuls the opposition and correlativity of the subject in relation to the object. But this conclusion is not drawn by Caird and Dr. Halldar. They insist, on the contrary, that the same self which distinguishes itself from the object also annuls the distinction, and in this

sense self-consciousness is a unity-in-difference which is the highest category of knowledge.

We have contended, on the contrary, that the foundational unity annuls every type of correlativity, and, therefore, cannot be identified with any of the correlative terms; consequently, the self which knows itself by distinguishing itself from the object cannot be the ultimate self *for* which all correlated objects have their meaning. In other words, the Absolute is not relative to anything other than itself, on the contrary, it is the non-relational ground of all relations, the pure conscious principle which is presupposed by all objects and inter-objective relations.

Here the old question forces itself once more upon us: How to know the knower which is the non-relational conscious principle? How can there be a philosophy of the Unconditioned? For answering these questions, we may, once again, refer to Śaṅkara's method. We have seen that, on the one hand, he is anxious to maintain that the Absolute is something very positive, though undefinable, and not a mere naught, as supposed, for instance, by the Buddhists. The unconditioned Absolute is beyond the limits of speech and thought, not because it is a mere 'x,' but because all definite and determinate knowledge is of the objects which can be distinguished from one another. These objects,—such as the pot, the pillar, etc., are determinate and related to things other than

themselves<sup>14</sup> But what is not determinate cannot be known by distinguishing it from other things. In this sense alone the Absolute Self is unknowable. The knower can never be the object that is known, much as the fire cannot burn itself.<sup>15</sup> The negative description is simply meant to deny of it all categories that are applicable to the objects, "it does not negative absolutely everything, but only everything except *Brahman*."<sup>16</sup> It is not apprehended, not because it does not exist, but because "it is the witness of whatever is apprehended."<sup>17</sup>

But, on the other hand, Śaṅkara is equally emphatic in his opinion that to *name* is to delimit and to know is to distinguish the thing known from the things different from itself. Hence, the problem which arises here is that of reconciling the doctrine of pure consciousness with the requirements of discursive thinking. The problem, however, is not peculiar to the advaita philosophy. We have already seen how J. Cook Wilson admits that consciousness is of the nature of an undefinable universal, and so to ask to define it is an instance of the fallacy of asking an unreal question. And this, in plain language, means

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<sup>14</sup> *I e., sthitam paricchinnam arthāntarasambandhi—Com on the Brh. Up. II. 3. 2.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 4. 14.

<sup>16</sup> S. B. III. 2. 22.

<sup>17</sup> S. B. III. 2. 23.

that consciousness cannot conform itself to the categories of discursive knowledge, and is so far *sui generis*. Similarly, Bradley acknowledges that when we are concerned with the immediate experience, we have necessarily to resort to metaphors, and, consequently, the term *for* is strictly speaking inapplicable to the non-relational background of relational knowledge; it can neither be explained nor described. Hence, both Bradley and Śaṅkara raise an identical question here, namely, how can we even name the non-relational unconditioned principle?<sup>18</sup>

Bradley returns here an evidently self-contradictory answer; namely, that though it is a positive, non-relational, non-objective whole of feeling, yet it contains on the other side distinctions which transcend its immediacy; hence, it is possible to set it before us "not only in partial detail but in its main general character," but its description must be "imperfect and half-negative." Śaṅkara's answer is, at least, consistent with the theory of immediate experience, and it runs as follows. Though the ultimate ground, which is our very self, is indescribable, yet the word 'self' may be first used in the sense of such determinate objects as the body, etc., and then each of these objects may be rejected as a not-self; and this will help the discursive intellect to go beyond its

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<sup>18</sup> See particularly, Bradley's *Truth and Reality*, p. 160. and Śaṅkara's *Commentary on the Ch. Up.* VII. 1. 3.

limitations and understand what is not an object. "Just as when a royal army is seen, the umbrellas, flags and other emblems of royalty point to the presence of the king who is not himself seen," and the people begin by asserting that there is the king, and then, "gradually setting aside all the objects and persons seen in the procession, come to have an idea of the presence of the king, though he may not be seen, exactly the same is the case in respect of the point at issue."<sup>19</sup>

This method of aiding the discursive understanding to form a tolerably clear idea of the unconditioned principle is known in the advaita literature as the method of *adhyūropāparāda* or that of figurative superimposition followed by subsequent negation. That is, though the Absolute is not the cause of the world, yet, we may begin by proving that he is the cause and the creator of the world, and then proceed to prove that the category is not applicable to it; or we may begin by asserting that the body is the self and then prove that it cannot be the self, and thus proceed from one not-self to another till we reach the innermost self which is the unconditioned conscious principle.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Com. on the Ch. Up. loc. cit.*, Cp. also S. B. I. 1. 12. and *Com. on the Gītā* XIII. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Such a procedure may easily remind us of J. Ward's analysis of self-consciousness which so far resembles the advaita theory of self, enclosed, as it were, within five sheaths

In fact, Śaṅkara's arguments and analysis which take different turns in different contexts are all designed for the one purpose of establishing that the self is identical with consciousness which, again, is the undefinable and unconditioned principle at the back of all relational experience and knowledge. It is the *Brahman* which cannot be represented "definitely as this or that object," it is "the eternal subject which is never an object," and within which there is no distinction of "objects known, knowers, acts of knowledge, etc."<sup>21</sup> A close approach to it is made by us in dreamless sleep during which the self exists without the 'I'-consciousness and without any consciousness of difference. It being the presupposition of all distinctions, there is no distinction within it, and in this sense it is *nirvikalpa*.<sup>22</sup> It cannot be known in the same sense in which the blue lotus is known, because it cannot be defined *per genus et differentiam*. Hence, again, the need of metaphors in describing it.

Śaṅkara, therefore, develops what may be called, following the language of Vaihinger, a philosophy of

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(*kośa*). The important difference, however, between Ward's position and that of Śaṅkara consists in this that while Ward, like Kant, is led to the agnostic theory of the pure ego, Śaṅkara, like Bradley, maintains that the unconditioned principle is immanent in our experience.

<sup>21</sup> S. B. I. 1. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Saṅkara's nirvikalpa*—*Com. on the Taitt. Upan. Brahmanaballī* Cp. also S. B. II. 3. 17; and III. 2. 16.

as if in describing the Absolute Self,—a philosophy which is at least as old as Yājñavalkya. The self, in fact, does not think and move, but “thinks as it were, and moves as it were.”<sup>23</sup> The *Brahman* may be compared to the sun which is “reflected in the water and the like,” and the one Self thus “appears one and many at the same time, just as the one moon is multiplied by its reflections in the water.”<sup>24</sup> Though in reality one and unchanging, the *Brahman* “participates as it were in the attributes and states of the body and the other limiting adjuncts within which it abides; it grows with them as it were, decreases with them as it were, and so on.”<sup>25</sup> Lastly, belonging to the Self, as it were, there are name and form which are “the germs of the entire expanse of the world,” called the *māyā*, *śakti*, or *prakṛti* of the omniscient Lord. In fact, however, none of these characteristics, such as, lordship, omniscience, or omnipotence, belong to the Self.<sup>26</sup>

Śaṅkara's method here has evidently some similarity with that of Kant. The ideas of reason, according to Kant, are mere regulative principles as distinct from the categories which are the constitutive principles of experience. God, for instance, has a

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<sup>23</sup> S. B. II. 3. 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, III. 2. 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, III. 2. 20.

<sup>26</sup> S. B. II. 1. 14.

regulative use in relation to our empirical knowledge, that is, though it is in fact a *focus imaginarius*, it may still serve to give to our knowledge the greatest possible unity. It is an *ideal* which may be set before us for attaining the highest amount of unity in our knowledge, and we may proceed in the work of systematising our knowledge, "as if the sum of all phenomena had its highest, all-sufficient ground in a self-subsistent, unconditioned, and creative reason." Similarly, though the self cannot be determined as a pure self-identical unity, yet, we might set about to systematise our knowledge of the mind with the *ideal* of such a unity, "as if the soul were a simple substance, which maintains its personal identity, though its states are constantly changing."

But, in spite of this similarity between the method of Kant and that of Śāṅkara, the point on which they differ is as important as their similarity. For Śāṅkara, neither God nor the self-identical unity of consciousness is a mere *focus imaginarius*; on the contrary, each is real in a certain sense. The individual self, for instance, is a composite structure, it is the eternal, unconditioned, conscious principle, circumscribed, as it were, by the unconscious principle, called *antaḥkāraṇa*. This unconditioned principle, far from being a mere empty form or a thing-in-itself is the very background of all determinate objects. Reality, in other words, is wider than what Kant



called the phenomenal world; that to which the categories are inapplicable is not an entirely inconceivable 'x,' nor does it belong to a world beyond the so-called phenomenal world. It is an infinite principle which, though undefinable, is the indispensable support of all objects and of all relations among the objects. It may be called the noumenal background of the phenomenal world, provided it is remembered that it is perfectly immanent in, though incomprehensible by, our relational experience; as immanent, it is knowable *par excellence*, like our feelings of pleasure and pain, but as non-relational, it cannot be known through relational mechanism.<sup>27</sup>

This, in short, is Śaṅkara's explanation of the method which must be adopted in describing the

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<sup>27</sup> Caird is certainly right in his criticism of Kant's theory of the unconditioned noumenon in so far as Kant leaves us in the dark as to what this noumenon is. Kant's ultimate purpose, however, as Caird tells us, is to show that the "exclusion of knowledge, it, in one aspect of it, means the limitation of our intelligence, as capable only of understanding that which is given to it through sense, in another aspect of it, points to the infinity of our nature, as subjects who are conscious of themselves, and who, as so conscious, are not subjected to the limitations which they impose on all the objects they know. The limitation of knowledge to phenomenon is thus the liberation of the noumenon, and especially of the noumenal subject, from the conditions to which all phenomenal objects are subjected." *The Critical Philosophy*, II, p. 141. If we had substituted for Kant's phenomenal objects the term 'objects in general,' this would be an illuminating exposition of the advaita position.

indescribable, unconditioned, infinite, Absolute Consciousness. Being the ground of all distinctions, there is no distinction *within* it; nor is there, strictly speaking, a relation between itself and the determinate objects; and when we speak of such a relation, it must be remembered that we cannot do so, as Bradley rightly puts it, except by a licence. To put it in the language of the advaita philosophers, a relation can exist only between objects and objects, and, consequently, the relation of the objects to the self is *anirvacanīya*. In order to think of the subject-object relation, we have to distinguish one from the other but in reality there is here no relation at all, not even the relation of distinction. The Self, in other words is non-relational or *asaṅga*. Hence, again, arises the need of the method of figurative attribution to it of the characters of determinate objects followed by their denial through a series of subsequent negations. In this way alone can the undetermined be determined and our discursive intellect may form a tolerably clear notion of what is essentially unspeakable.<sup>28</sup>

In the light of these considerations, it may be evident that the critics of the advaita doctrine have really done a great injustice to it by their unwarranted assumption that the Undetermined Absolute is either

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<sup>28</sup> I.e., this is the way in which *niṣprapañcam prapañcyate* and *avācyaṁapi pratyāyayati*, as put by the advaita philosophers.

a mere nothing or an abstract identity. The former has been the central allegation of the philosophers of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school and of the non-advaita vedānta schools of thought, while the latter is the assumption of Hegel and his followers. Thus, for instance, Vātsyāyana asks: who can prove the reality of a God who, being undetermined by such qualities as knowledge, etc., is beyond perception, inference, and the scripture?<sup>29</sup> Rāmānuja, similarly, starts his classical refutation of the position of Śaṅkara with the contemptuous assertion that the doctrine of indeterminate reality is not at all to be respected, and, inasmuch as every type of proof must pertain to a determinate reality, those who hold the doctrine of indeterminate reality cannot even say that this is the proof for such a reality.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Budhyādibhūścātmalinga-rūpākhyam*      *īśvaram*  
*pratyakṣānumānāgamaviśayātītam kaḥ śakta upapādayitum—*  
*Lhāṣya* IV. 1. 28. Vātsyāyana of course has in mind here certain thinkers preceding Śaṅkara, who had advocated the advaita doctrine of undetermined Absolute. And he rejects it in order to make room for his own theory of God who is possessed of qualities and is of the nature of human self.

<sup>30</sup> *Nirviśeṣavastuvādibhiḥ nirviśeṣ vastuni idam*  
*pramāṇam iti na śakyate vaktum, saviśeṣa-vastu-viśayatvāt*  
*sarvapramāṇmām—Śrībhāṣya* I. 1. 1. Indeed, it is surprising how Rāmānuja entirely misses the force of Śaṅkara's arguments everywhere and sees nothing but pure sophistry in all that Śaṅkara says in defence of his conclusion. He seems to start with the prejudice that a conclusion must be fallacious because of the mere fact that it has been defended by Śaṅkara. Such a sectarian prejudice may perhaps be due

A detailed examination of the arguments which the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers and the thinkers of the non-advaita vedānta schools have brought against the advaita theory of Indeterminate Absolute is not possible here. Nor is such an examination needed after what has been already said in respect of the psychological approach to the problem of knowledge and that of the self. God, self, matter, or mind,—in fact, everything that is real must, it is assumed, conform to the categories of substance, attribute, cause, effect, etc. The notion of foundational knowledge or that of the ground-category has no place in their systems, and their theories of knowledge do not differ essentially from what has been made familiar to us by Locke and the modern psychologists in general. Once it is assumed that everything, including the self, must be an object of proof in the same sense in which, say, the table or the tree is proved, there is no wonder that the self, individual as well as the Absolute, should be taken as one object among other objects, and then all talks about an unobjectifiable ultimate principle would look like futile attempts to prove what does not exist at all. The Absolute, on this assumption, has

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partly to the fact that the latter criticised the Bhāgavata system for its dogma of the origin of the individual soul and mainly to the anti-theistic tendency of Śaṅkara's speculations which apparently could not satisfy the intensely religious sentiments of Rāmānuja.

either to be pushed entirely beyond the scope of human knowledge and faculties, or definitely abandoned once for all.

As a transition to Hegel's criticism of the Indeterminate Absolute, we must emphasise the great chasm lying between the psychological approaches to the problem of knowledge and what we have called the epistemological approach. Hegel would never accept the view of Vātsyāyana or Rāmānuja in so far as they fail to rise above the categories of substance and attribute. Even life and the living organism require for their adequate comprehension higher categories than those of substance and attribute. In fact, the Hegelian gradations of the categories are essentially incompatible with the mechanical theories of knowledge favoured by Rāmānuja and his followers as well as by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers. This fundamental difference between the Hegelian idealists and the Indian realists cannot be really bridged over by the superficial similarities which apparently exist between their arguments.

Hegel's criticism of the *Brahman* is well known. A pure characterless Absolute, according to him, is a simple blank vacuity which can explain neither itself nor its 'other.' It does not matter, he points out, whether the abstract identity be named space, or time, or pure consciousness, ego; in so far as it is an abstract absolute, it lacks the condition of a synthesis, which

consists in mediation or a reference to another. It is quite the same thing as "what the Indian names *Brahma*, when, externally motionless and no less internally emotionless, looking years long only to the tip of his own nose, he says within himself just *om*, *om*, *om*, or perhaps just nothing at all. This dull void consciousness, conceived as consciousness, is Being"<sup>31</sup> But to plant ourselves thus fast in the abstract absolute is an impossible feat for thought. And, consequently, Jacobi, Parmenides, and Spinoza, have failed in keeping to such abstractions. "Just this *indeterminateness of being*, however, is what constitutes its determinateness: for indeterminateness is opposed to determinateness." Knowledge, therefore, cannot find self-fulfilment in the abstract identity of pure being, it needs everywhere a synthesis, a relation of the pure Being to its 'other.'

Following this line of thought, Hegel comes to his well-known doctrine of an Absolute Spirit, which, far from being indeterminate and relation-less, is the ultimate synthesis of all relations. It is a Principle of Self-consciousness which, to put it in the language of E. Caird, manifests itself in the difference of self and not-self, that through this difference, and by overcoming it, it may attain the highest unity with itself.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> J. H. Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, p. 223.

<sup>32</sup> *Hegel*, p. 183.

It is, again, infinite, not in the sense of an Indeterminate Being, but as a Being which includes its 'other' into itself, a self-determined whole in which all differences and oppositions are brought back to unity.

The difference between such a conception of the Absolute from what we are explaining in these pages has been pointed out above. What is needed here is to urge emphatically that the advaita Absolute is not a bare abstract identity. That all categories are relative, and that each finite reality has something else to limit it, have been the recognised tenets of sound philosophy in India since the time of the Buddhists at the latest. Each category refers to its contradictory category, and derives its meaning from its relation to the other, and, consequently, even the category of unity or identity has a meaning only in so far it is contrasted with the category of plurality or difference. But the conclusion that is drawn from this relativity of the categories is, *not* that the Absolute is an abstract identity, but that it is beyond all relational categories. The Infinite, Foundational, Consciousness, is beyond all notions of duality, multiplicity, or relativity; it is the foundational unity which is the presupposition of all relative categories. And, strictly speaking, it is "incapable of any number"<sup>33</sup> That is, the category

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<sup>33</sup> Śaṅkara's *Com. on the Ch. Up.* VII. 24. 1. Compare Bradley's remark that "unity, in its more proper sense, is

of identity which derives its meaning from its contrast with the category of difference is not to be confused with the ground-unity which is implied by all relational categories. And such a foundational unity is to be found in our own self; because the self, in so far as it distinguishes 'a' from 'b,' cannot itself be one of these distinguished terms. It is true that 'a' has no meaning apart from its contrast with 'b'; *i.e.*, 'a,' if it is entirely separated from 'b,' will reduce itself to an abstract identity. But the self *for* which 'a' has a meaning as contra-distinguished from 'b' must belong to a different order of reality; and, consequently, what is true of 'a' cannot be true of the self.

It is certainly true that to think of a thing or even to name it, the thing must be distinguished from another thing. It is also true that one thing can be distinguished from another only in so far as there is a unity underlying both the things that are distinguished from one another. Hegel, that is, is certainly right in asserting that a thing is what it is only in and by reason of its limit; and this is almost a literal translation of Śaṅkara's contention that a thing different from another thing is the limit of the latter <sup>24</sup>

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known only as contradistinguished from plurality," and so far it is itself an appearance, and, as such, cannot be applied to the Real; yet, it is possible "to use unity with a different meaning".—*Appearance and Reality*. p. 461.

<sup>24</sup> *Bhinnam hi vastu vastrantara:ya antobharati*, etc — *Com. on the Tait. Up.*, the second chapter of *Brahmaballī*



Similarly, as we have seen above, Vācaspati is very clear on the point that two things cannot conflict with each other when they have difference in their foundations. In other words, conflicts presuppose an underlying unity. So far there is no disparity between the position of Hegel and that of the advaita thinkers. But their positions become irreconcilable when we come to the category of Infinite. For Hegel, the infinite is neither indeterminate nor something determined from outside; the true infinite includes its 'other' into itself, it is at least a Being-for-itself, and, as such, different from the false infinite which is restricted from outside and is so far really finite. For the advaita thinkers, on the other hand, the Infinite,—which may be called Self, or Consciousness—is the presupposition of all distinctions, including the distinction of 'here' from 'there,' that of 'now' from 'then,' and that of one object from another. All objects are limited in these three ways; the Absolute, on the other hand, is free from this threefold limitation.

To put this basic contrast of the Hegelian type of absolutism with the advaita position in another form, the category of unity-in-difference which is taken by the former as the highest category of reality would be considered by the latter as a category under which the objects exist, but not the Absolute *for* which they have a meaning. Two objects that are distinguished from one another must have an underlying unity; but this

principle cannot apply to the Absolute which is essentially Self or Consciousness. The foundational unity, that is, is not the category of unity. The latter is implied by the different finite things, while the former is the non-relational background of all finite things. The Infinite, in other words, cannot exist under the same relations as the finite, and if all relations are supposed to imply determinate terms, then, the Infinite is not a term at all. It is rather the Indeterminate Principle which, being the ultimate ground of all relations, is not related in the same way in which the objects are related *inter se*.<sup>35</sup>

Hegel's misinterpretation of the advaita Absolute, it may now be clear, arose out of his misapplication of the categories of objects to the non-relational Principle. He would, of course, deny the reality of a non-relational principle; but, then, his criticism of the advaita Absolute should have been directed against

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<sup>35</sup> We must, therefore, be on our guard when the Absolute is described as the All-knower, the Universal Mind, or the Infinite Spirit. These have all a dualistic significance and a relativistic association. The Absolute, as explained in these pages, cannot be strictly described even as the Self which is *in itself* and *for itself*, inasmuch as such a description has no meaning apart from the assumption that difference enters into the nature of the Absolute, howsoever, 'transparent' it might be. Hence, again, the categories of reality and existence must necessarily change their meanings when they are applied to the Absolute. The Absolute has no relational reality or conditioned existence, yet, it is the very foundation of all relational and conditioned existences

this point rather than against the category of abstract identity which he erroneously identified with the non-relational principle. The perplexities which he discovered in the position of Parmenides and Spinoza could not surely be identical with those of the advaita position which, we must insist once more, holds that the Absolute, being strictly the Unconditioned Principle, cannot be even *named* without bringing it under the conditions of the discursive intellect. Hence arises the necessity of indicating it through the method of figurative attribution to it of the categories of Intellect followed by a series of negations.

We may summarise these contentions in the following way:—The Self must be ‘something’ other than the terms of a given relation. This relation may be spatial, temporal, causal, etc. All categories are relational, and, consequently, inapplicable to the Self which is essentially unconditioned or non-relational. Identity and difference, the whole and the part, substance and attribute, means and end, cause and effect, etc., are all relational categories and are, therefore, applicable to the objects only, and not to the Self. The Self, on the contrary, is like the light of the sun which manifests all objects, though it itself does not stand in need of another source of light for its own manifestation. Yet, the Self is ever present in all our knowledge and in all our activities in its pure immediacy, and, as such, it can neither be denied

nor objectified. It may be positively described as the Conscious Principle to which all objects are presented, and which, therefore, is not itself presented to a more ulterior principle. In this sense, it is knowable *par excellence*, though the categories are inapplicable to it. It is true that the categories are both modes of thought and modes of existence, but this is true of the objects only which are necessarily determinate, finite, and relational. If an object does not come under any category, it must reduce itself to a mere naught, a featureless 'x'; but what is true of the object is not true of the Self which is necessarily immediate, infinite, and non-relational. Again, it may be admitted that in the world of objects, there are grades of reality, so that a given category that is adequate for explaining the lower order of existence is inadequate for explaining the realities of a higher order. But it must be admitted at the same time that the Self does not belong to the orders of objective reality at all, and, consequently, it cannot be said to be *the highest reality among the objects*. That is, the Self is not something like the highest object in a world of other objects, but, on the contrary, it is that *for* which all objects lower as well as higher, have a meaning. Hence, the principle of degrees is not applicable to the Self.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Haldane remarks that a being that knows seems to belong to an order quite different in kind from that of one that merely lives without knowing—*The Reign of Relativity*,

It must be added in conclusion that our criticism of the Hegelian account of self-knowledge does not affect in the least our conviction that Hegel has done a signal service to the cause of epistemology by his doctrine of the universal. Knowledge implies the universal validity of the categories, and the latter cannot be proved or known in the same way in which a particular fact is known or proved. All we have attempted to make clear is that the Self is not a category at all, and, consequently, it cannot be said to be even a system or a relational whole or, again, a unity-in-difference. On the contrary, it is the ultimate, non-relational, Consciousness, which is necessarily distinctionless, unobjectifiable, and immediate. Whatever is relational and mediated cannot be the Self,

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p 151 But he does not appear to see as clearly that what he calls foundational knowledge cannot be the highest reality of the same order with the class of objects inasmuch as it is the presupposition of all distinctions including the distinctions of degrees in the objects. That he is not entirely satisfied with his own solution of the problem of self-knowledge is evident from his remark that a way out of the difficulty "appears possible if existence actually presents itself at stages or degrees which are different in kind, and if the one system of reality can therefore appear in different aspects which vary according to the order of thought within which reality is interpreted, as even in Einstein's physical doctrine." *Ibid*, p 180. But having not realised clearly all the implications of his doctrine of foundational knowledge, he assumed that the foundational knowledge also belonged to the world of objects, and, consequently, supposed that it was nothing more than the highest reality among the objects, something like the highest monad of Leibnitz.

though relativity and mediatedness belong to the very nature of the objects. To have raised philosophy from the particular to the universal was in itself a great achievement, but it is now necessary to raise it further from the universal to the Self.



## APPENDIX A

### THE ROLE OF REASONING IN ADVAITA PHILOSOPHY

An implicit faith in Revelation with its consequent distrust of independent thought, it is well known, is claimed to be the privilege of the orthodox systems of Indian philosophy in general and of the Vedānta school in particular. Historically, this condemnation of reasoning or *tarka* is at least as old as the Upaniṣads which, as is particularly evident from the well-known verse of the Kathopaniṣad, placed the ultimate reality entirely beyond the ambit of reasoning and argumentation. Śaṅkara's distinction between Reality regarded from the *pāramārthika* or eternal standpoint and Reality as it is for the human finite understanding—a distinction which is essentially a reproduction of the Buddhistic distinction of *paramārtha* or *pariniṣpanna* knowledge from what is merely *lokaśāñvṛtisaṁyā* or *paratantṛa*—breathes the self-same agnostic attitude that limits the powers of human thinking and other faculties of knowledge to the world of ordinary experience alone. The Absolute, it is reiterated in diverse contexts, is unknowable and unthinkable and is purely *śabdamūla* and *śabdōpamāṇaka*; and Śaṅkara, far from considering it as an unphilosophical attitude, declares irrational reliance on Revelation to be at the root of the evidential superiority of his own position to the rationalistic systems of philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

So far Śaṅkara's position is analogous to modern agnosticism, such as is illustrated in the systems of Kant and

<sup>1</sup> *Vedāntarāhyānāmaidamparyāṇa nirūpaṇitum śāstram prarṇitāṇa na tarkaśāstrat kevalābhīryuktibhiḥ kañcitsiddhāntam sādhaṇitum dīṇayitum iā prarṇitam*—S. B. II. 2. 1



Spencer which restricts human knowledge without questioning its objective validity within the world of ordinary experience investigated by science. Kant, for instance, despite his limitation of scientific knowledge to the phenomenal world, vindicated the claims of science, against the sceptical conclusions of Hume, to offer universal and necessary truth. Sāṅkara, however, has also a sceptical tendency, and his misology, when judged in the light of some of his express statements, knows no bounds. This instability of reasoned knowledge, according to them, is not due to the pretension of reason to step beyond the limits of the phenomenal world; it is, on the contrary, inherent in the very nature of human reason. Reasoning, in so far as it is independent of traditional authority (*śrāgama*), has nothing to check its immethodical desultoriness, and, consequently, a reasoned conclusion, howsoever carefully obtained, cannot be placed above the risk of refutation by a more powerful dialectician. The defect, it is said, is inherent in human reason which is different for different men (*puruṣa-mativairūpyāt*), and it vitiates all conclusions obtained through independent thinking.<sup>2</sup>

The obvious objection to this unqualified condemnation of all reasoned knowledge, as he sees clearly, is that the very instability of reasoning has to be established on the basis of reasoning itself. The second objection which he anticipates is that universal scepticism would make life impossible which is based on our ability to infer the future

<sup>2</sup> *Utpreksāmūlraṇibandhanūstarkā apratiṣṭhītā bhavanti*—S. B. II. 1.

11. This universal scepticism in regard to the efficiency of independent reasoning is more pronounced in Sāṅkara's commentary on the Kāthakopaniṣad I. 2. 8, where private judgment is condemned as vitiated reasoning or *lutarka* without a particle of stability in respect of any object of enquiry. In the S. B., however, Sāṅkara appears to shudder at his own shadow and discovers that universal scepticism refutes itself.

behaviours of things. Thirdly, the real meaning of the Scripture which is to sit in judgment upon reasoned knowledge has to be collected out of the evidently contradictory statements of the Scripture and this itself requires reasoning. Lastly, it is not reasonable to infer the instability of reasoning from the different conclusions so far attained, for, the fallacies of the earlier generations may be removed by the more careful reasoning of a later age. Out of these possible objections to the theory of universal scepticism, the first and the third are evidently of a formidable character, and their formidableness is appreciated by Saṅkara himself who hastens, in reply, to acknowledge the finality of reasoning in certain cases only. And then in place of a universal scepticism which dominates his imagination, he contents himself with a modified agnosticism of some sort. This, however, does not turn the point of criticism. When the question is one of reconciling universal scepticism with itself, it is no answer to say that reason sheds unfaltering light on certain topics. And, similarly, when the problem is to ascertain how, if no reasoning has an independent authority, a particular interpretation of the scriptural statements represents their real, as distinct from the apparent, meaning, it is idle to refer to an imaginary consensus of opinions of all interpreters. If the Veda is the source of right knowledge, and if the consensus of opinions of all rationalists who have ever sought to interpret the Veda be regarded as sufficient for understanding its real meaning, then certainly right knowledge is unattainable even by Saṅkara whose interpretation has not stood the test he himself offers for distinguishing the perfect knowledge from the imperfect. The consensus of opinions being itself the point at issue, it cannot be appealed to in vindication of the scriptural authority. The Scriptures may shine in their

own light as Śaṅkara will have his readers believe but in what particular light they will shine upon a particular interpreter depends largely on the inner light which he brings with himself.

Though, however, Śaṅkara has failed to justify the validity of his own interpretation of the Scriptures, his condemnation of the human faculties of knowledge, when viewed in the light of some of his clearly expressed opinions, continues steady and undisturbed throughout his exposition. The Absolute, it is said, is too deep for our faculties and, consequently, falls beyond their scope, and reasoning in respect of the Absolute must, therefore, be conducted under the control of the Scriptures. So far, then, there seems to be ample justification for the opinion, widely shared by the exponents and critics of Śaṅkara, that "Śaṅkara's apparent abdication of private judgment, his reliance on instruction imparted by another, and his abhorrence of unfettered thought, are disconcertingly suggestive of the narrowness of European medieval philosophy, and seem to place a deep chasm between Vedantic and modern speculation."<sup>3</sup> This opinion has been expressed almost in an epigrammatic style by another accomplished scholar of our time who remarks that Śaṅkara "does not accept the authority of logic as a means of cognising the Absolute, but he deems it a privilege of the Vedānta to fare without logic since he has Revelation to fall back upon."<sup>4</sup>

There is, however, another side of the shield. While professing an undiluted abhorrence of pure reason, Śaṅkara does not fail to cut out by-paths for letting in the light of

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<sup>3</sup> Principal W. S. Uquhart, *The Vedānta and Modern Thought*, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. T. Stecherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, p. 38.

reason; and the result is that his philosophy, far from reducing itself to a mere catalogue of dogmas, has the appearance of a finished product of rational insight and careful observation. It is but rarely that he rests content with quoting authority, and when a vital point is at stake he plays the rationalist with such an exquisite thoroughness and skill that his scholastic reverence for the Vedas threatens to pale into a mere lip-homage to an authority which cannot be openly disobeyed. This rational foundation of the Vedānta thought has been rightly discovered by P. Deussen who, while noting that the Vedānta helps itself out of the difficulties arising from its condemnation of the secular canons of knowledge "by the shortcut of substituting a theological for the philosophical means of knowledge,"<sup>5</sup> sees at the same time that Śaṅkara "makes a far more extensive use" of philosophic reflection as an aid than might appear from his anti-rational expressions, and that its perfection in this respect "may itself speak for the fact that we have to do here with a monument of Indian antiquity not merely theological, but also in the highest degree philosophical."<sup>6</sup> That Śaṅkara's profound respect for the Vedas has not successfully silenced the voice of Reason is indirectly admitted even by Dr. Stecherbatsky who while complaining of his negative attitude to logic proceeds in the same context to emphasize Śaṅkara's accusation of the Mādhyamika on the ground that the latter disregards all logic. Śaṅkara, it is said, treats the Mādhyamika with great contempt for his denial of "the possibility of cognising the Absolute by logical methods."

It is true that he frequently anathematizes unfettered and unbiassed reasoning. Rational disquisition, according

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<sup>5</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 90

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96

to him require the moderating influence of Revelation to conduct them to the Absolute Truth. The real foundation of his misology, however, does not seem to be an inherent distrust of Reason, though some of his expressions, as we have admitted above, lend countenance to an audacious outspoken scepticism. Paradoxical as it may appear, Sāṅkara's distrust of pure reason has its moorings in a profound love of reason. The self-fulfilment of reason is not to be found in immethodical and desultory argumentations based upon individual idiosyncrasies; reasoning, when pursued on no better ground than the satisfaction of a solitary impulse or the desire for intellectual victory, leads to no definite conclusion. The test of true reasoning, on the other hand, is the unity of result in which the process terminates; it is the universality and necessity of the conclusion which provides the surest criterion of good reasoning. As the Scripture stands this test of unity and universality, as it is in this sense objective reason writ large, all individual rational processes must be conducted under the guidance of Revelation.

That this is the real intention of Sāṅkara's denunciation of reasoned knowledge seems to be evident from a number of considerations. The apparent anomalies and conflicts of the scriptural texts, according to him, are not devoid of a unity of significance; nor do they really contradict tradition (*smṛti*) or reason (*nyāya*) when the latter are rightly conceived. Hence, a considerable space (*viz.*, Chapter II, Part 1) is devoted to the removal of apparent contradictions between Revelation on the one hand and *smṛti* and *nyāya* on the other. If reasoning had been altogether subversive of Revelation or *vice versa*, there could arise no question of their reconciliation; and in that case, Sāṅkara, like the Latin Fathers such as Tertullian and

Arnobius, would unhesitatingly adopt the sceptical doctrine of *Credo quia absurdum*. But, far from avoiding all contact with reasoning and discussions, every objection to Revelation on the ground of reasoning and ordinary experience is carefully discussed in order to exhibit its hollowness. All such objections are supposed to be due to errors of judgment or misinterpretations of experience; and consequently they are found to have no force when these errors and misinterpretations are avoided.<sup>7</sup> What is condemned, therefore, is, not any and every type of reasoned knowledge, but purposelessly dry hair-splitting (*śuśatārka* or *kutarka*) which leads to no definite conclusion. That is, it is not Reason *as such*, but the misuse of the reasoning faculty, which misses the truth; but as it is extremely difficult to steer clear of the infinite sources of error in our reasoning processes, and as it is not always easy to detect the logical aberrations in the arguments of an accomplished dialectician, the agreement of our reasoned conclusions with the Scripture provides the safest criterion for us that we are not so far off the right track.

Śaṅkara's respect for independent reasoning is perhaps nowhere more pronounced than in the *tarkapāda* of his Commentary. None who is entirely sceptical of the efficiency and finality of reasoned knowledge would care for a reasoned refutation of the arguments offered in support of rival theories. And Śaṅkara has no doubt in his mind that all arguments that have ever been advanced for building up non-monistic theories of the universe are but pseudo-arguments and that their fallacies can be detected, not only by the disparity existing between their conclusions and Revela-

<sup>7</sup> *Narāyaṇādine darśane kṛāṇḍasāmaṅgasyamañi*—S B II 2—4.

to but also by a more carefully conducted reasoning independent of Revelation.<sup>8</sup> It is easy to guess that a consistent sceptic cannot pronounce an anathema on all reasoning processes while himself claiming finality for his reasoned refutation of the rival theories, especially when this refutation is undertaken independently of Revelation. Śaṅkara himself, in acknowledging the need for a reasoned refutation of the non-monistic systems, admits the distinction between false exposition (*vyākhyānābhāsa*) and true exposition (*amyagvyākhyāna*), thus implying a similar distinction between pseudo-reasoning and true reasoning.

It is, however, surprising that while insisting on the unknowability of the Absolute in the light of the human faculties of knowledge, Śaṅkara has also the tendency to acquiesce in an unrestricted application of reasoning to all spheres of reality including the Absolute. This tendency is particularly prominent in his exposition of the *Bṛh Upaniṣad*. The Vājñavalkya-kāṇḍa is said to be pre-eminently argumentative in character (*tarkaprodhāna*) as distinct from the Madhu-kāṇḍa, and the Absolute is supposed to be reasoned out (*vādena vicāritum*) on the ground that the knowledge of the Self which leads to immortality can also be attained through arguments.<sup>9</sup> Such passages are in evident conflict with those which breathe the agnostic tendency of Śaṅkara's epistemology. It may be suggested that even here Śaṅkara has in mind, not independent reasoning, but arguments under the control of Revelation (*śrutyānugṛhata tarka*).

<sup>8</sup> *Iha tu vākyanirapekṣaḥ svatantrastadyakṛtipratishedhaḥ kriyate* — S. B. II. 2. 1

<sup>9</sup> *Tadeva tarkenāpyamṛtatvasādhanam saṁnyāsa-mātma-jñānam adhyagamyate*. Cp. also *Uṇi on Gaudapāda Kārikā* III. 1, where it is said that the Absolute can be known even through arguments (*śakyate tarkenāpi jñātum*).

But such a suggestion would hardly fit into the contexts in which the passages occur.

If, however, Śaṅkara's epistemology is to be worked out of the general spirit, as distinct from the *ipsissima verba*, of his contentions it must be characterised, neither as rationalism such as is represented by Leibnitz or Hegel, nor as agnosticism of the type which is the result of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. What, however, appears to need emphasis is that Śaṅkara's repudiation of rationalism or panlogism does not militate against his respect for reason, and it would be perhaps no exaggeration to say that his implicit faith in Revelation would not allow any ultra-rational pronouncement to override the results of carefully tested observations or of reflective judgments. While waxing eloquent on the unthinkability of the Absolute which is supposed to be too deep for human faculties of knowledge, he leaves at the same time a wide scope for independent thinking and observation.

That a strong under-current of free thought flowed beneath Śaṅkara's scholastic reverence for the Holy Writ is also evident from some of his momentous observations on the limits of the Scriptures. He agrees that even the holy texts cannot make us understand what is contradictory and, consequently, proceeds to remove the apparent contradictions with regard to the nature of the Absolute.<sup>10</sup> The Śāstra, it is said elsewhere, is not out for changing the nature of things, its real function is to make known the true nature of what is not known; fire will not be cool, nor will the sun cease to burn, even if the Scripture reiterates such examples

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<sup>10</sup> *Śabdānāpi na śakyate v.rudh'o'rt'at' p atyāyayitum*—S. B  
II 1 27.



a hundred times.<sup>11</sup> All the reason why such examples are ineffectual for knowledge is said to be the contrary testimony of other sources of knowledge. (*Pramāṇāntareṇyathādhagatatvāt vastunah.*) If this line of thought is developed to its logical consequences, Śaṅkara's position may be called agnosticism which accepts the validity of human knowledge within certain limits only, as distinct from scepticism that questions the general validity of knowledge. The Absolute, then, is unknowable except on the basis of the Scripture, not because our knowledge is inherently defective, but because the Absolute is supersensuous (*atīndriya*). Each source of knowledge has its own sphere of application; contradictions arise only when the canons of knowledge are misapplied beyond their respective fields. This aspect of Śaṅkara's theory of knowledge is emphasised by Suresvara and Vācaspati. The different sources of knowledge, it is said, do not conflict with one another as they pertain to different objects; each is valid within its proper field; but when two conflicting judgments are made about the same object, one of them must be false.<sup>12</sup> It would be absurd, it is continued, to urge that the right canons of knowledge can contradict each other, because the testimony of a particular source of knowledge can neither be refuted nor corroborated by that of another, much as it is absurd to argue that this is not a sound on the ground that I see only a colour.<sup>13</sup>

11 Na śāstraṁ padārthān anyathākartuṁ pravṛttam kuṁ tarhi yathābhūtānāmajātānān nāpane - nahyagnih śīta ādityo na tapatīti rā dr̥ṣṭāntasātenāpi pratipādayitum śakyaṁ—Com. on the Bṛhad. Up. II. 1. 20 Compare also nahi vacanam vastuto'nyathākarāṇe vyāpṛyate kuṁ tarhi yathābhūtārthavadyotane—Com. on Praśnopanīṣad, VI. 2

12 Na tu pramāṇaṁ sat pramāṇāntareṇa vīrudhyate—Naukaṁmyasiddhi, III 96.

13 Nāyaṁ śabdah kuto yasmāt rūpaṁ paśyāmi cakṣusā, ut yadvat tathavācyaṁ vīrodho'ksajavākyaayoḥ—Loc. cit. III. 84 This is clearly

Enough perhaps has been said to show that Śaṅkara, if he is taken literally, has as many as three distinct tendencies in his epistemology, which may be respectively called scepticism, rationalism and agnosticism. When, however, we refuse to run away with isolated passages in which these conflicting theories are supported, when, that is, his position is considered as a whole, it may be aptly characterized as rational intuitionism as distinct from anti-rational mysticism. In this regard, the method of the Advaita school offers a strong contrast with that of Buddhist monism. In the second period of Buddhist philosophy when monistic systems replaced the radical pluralism of the first period, the *dharma*s including the *skandhas*, *āyatana*s and *dhātus* were reduced to mere shadowy existences. And as these alone were supposed to constitute the phenomenal world of ordinary experience, it was condemned as a mere *samvṛti-satya*, as distinct from the non-relational Absolute revealed in mystic intuitions alone. But the nemesis of universal scepticism or unqualified relativism worked itself out when the Absolute Reality also reduced itself to the status of the dependent or relative reality. Buddhist philosophy, however, assumed a saner attitude to reasoned knowledge at the hands of Dīṇnāga and Dharmakīrti who replaced the universal scepticism of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti by a sort of modified rationalism.

The germ of scepticism, as we have seen above, was not altogether absent from Śaṅkara's position, though it did not develop into a full-fledged theory at his hands. But the dialectic method of the Buddhist thinkers provided an

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indicated even by Śaṅkara when he says: *na ca pramāṇam pramāṇāntareṇa virudhyate, pramāṇāntaratisajameva hi pramāṇāntaram jñāpayati*—Com. on Brh. Up. II. 1.

attractive weapon for the followers of Sankara who lost time or energy in applying it in the interest of absolute monism. Hence, as early as the beginning of the ninth century Maṇḍana Miśra sought to expose the self-contradictory nature of the concept of difference in his *Brahmasiddhi*,<sup>14</sup> and the dialectic was subsequently applied to all the categories of thought by Śrīharaṣa, Citsukha and other distinguished thinkers of the Advaita school. Thus, the inchoate scepticism of Sankara developed into an unqualified misology at the hands of his followers; and the Advaita dialecticians, like Śrīharaṣa and Ānandaśāhāna, instead of limiting the validity of human faculties of knowledge to the phenomenal world, paved the way to universal scepticism by a negative criticism of every category of thought. A similar degeneration of the Hegelian criticism of categories is illustrated by Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*. A category, for Hegel, is no doubt self-discrepant, but this is due to its forced abstraction from the higher category in which the inconsistencies of the lower category are reconciled. For Bradley, on the other hand, every category of knowledge can give us only appearance, and in this regard, one category is as bad as another. It does not, therefore, appear to be altogether true that there is great "family likeness between the dialectical method of Hegel and Nāgārjuna's dialectics,"<sup>15</sup> if this is meant to deny the important difference between the immanent criticism of the categories which alone is recommended by Hegel and the purely negative criticism undertaken by the Buddhist and the Advaita dialecticians. The

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<sup>14</sup> It is now held by many scholars that Maṇḍana's *Brahmasiddhi*, which influenced considerably the followers of Sankara, represents the pre-Sankara aspect of Vedānta Vācaspati, e.g., read into Sankara's views Maṇḍana's dialectic on difference.

<sup>15</sup> Dr T. Stecherbatsky, *Nirvāṇa*, p 53

result of this negative criticism is that the Dharmakāya of Nāgārjuna, the Brahman of Śrīharṣa and the Absolute of Bradley, far from being the crowning phase of man's search for absolute truth, are simply shot out of a pistol.

For Śaṅkara, on the other hand, thought or intellectual interpretation of experience, far from being a useless superfluity, represents an indispensable stage of discipline leading to the highest type of experience in which the Absolute Reality stands self-revealed. It is true that the Absolute, for him, transcends the powers of discursive thought, and, consequently, our faculties of knowledge are inherently incapable of giving us the highest truth; but inasmuch as the path to the highest experience lies across the region of discursive thought, a rigorous exercise of intellect must precede that experience. The Absolute, therefore, is not to be realised through mere scriptural texts, nor is the scrupulous exercise of reason a blasphemous deviation from the path of God.<sup>16</sup> Each step of the threefold discipline has its proper function which cannot be performed by another. Consequently, the expression of the Highest Reality in the relational form of discursive thought has the useful function of stimulating thought to go beyond itself. This aspect of Śaṅkara's epistemology requires more emphasis than it has so far received at the hands of his exponents and critics.

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<sup>16</sup> *Asau dr̥ṣṭo bhavati Śratapannamananānīdhyāsanasādhanaḥ . . . . .*  
*nānyathā śratapannāmatrena—Com. on the Brh Up. IV 2. 5. Cp.*  
*Aparokṣānubhūti:—Notpadgate vinā jñānaḥ tu ārenūnyasādhanaḥ*

## P. DEUSSEN'S INTERPRETATION OF VEDĀNTA

Some of the debatable points in Deussen's presentation of the vedānta thought have already provoked criticism. The following lines are intended to remove a few more misconceptions which his interpretation has helped to perpetuate, and some of which, though of a rather serious character, are still unchecked and unchallenged. And the result is that the modern students of the vedānta thought, particularly of the advaita school, have so far failed to appreciate the value and vitality of that profound analysis of experience which is strongly suggested, if not always definitely formulated, by the advaita thinkers. A complete critical evaluation of Deussen's interpretation, therefore, is long over-due. The agnostic interpretation of the advaita position being fraught with very far-reaching consequences for its theory of knowledge, we need offer no apology for starting from this point.

The advaita Absolute, it is generally believed, is something unknowable and inconceivable and falls entirely beyond the ambit of ordinary experience; and so far it is supposed to be analogous to the "thing-in-itself" of Kant. This agnostic interpretation of Sāṅkara was started by no less an authority than Paul Deussen who did so much for the spread and appreciation of the advaita speculations, and whose works on the Upaniṣads and the advaita Vedānta are justly regarded as pioneer works in the field of Indian philosophy. In showing the contrast of the standpoint of Ignorance, of Knowledge, and of superior Knowledge in

relation to *Brahman*, Deussen remarks that though the general view lying at the basis of the Upaniṣads is that *Brahman* is an object of knowledge, and, as such, it must be seen, heard, comprehended, and reflected upon, yet very soon "it came to be realised that this knowledge of *Brahman* was essentially of a different nature from that which we call 'knowledge' in ordinary life." The conception of *avidyā*, Deussen continues, was developed from the negative idea of mere ignorance to the positive idea of false knowledge, and this step "is the same which Parmenides and Plato took when they affirmed that the knowledge of the world of sense was mere deception . . . which Kant took, when he showed that the entire reality of experience is only apparition and not reality ("thing-in-itself")."<sup>1</sup> And the primitive source of the entire conception of the unknowableness of the ātman, it is further remarked, "is to be found in the speeches of Yājñavalkya in the Brihadāraṇyaka."<sup>2</sup> These speeches imply that "the supreme ātman is unknowable, because he is the all-comprehending unity, whereas all knowledge presupposes a duality of subject and object": and secondly that "the individual ātman also . . . is unknowable, because in all knowledge he is the knowing subject ("the knower"), consequently can never be object." It is unnecessary to show in detail how Deussen has attempted to prove that the "unknowableness" of the self is a doctrine which, though in opposition to the general tendency of the Upaniṣads to seek

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<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 71.

Dr. S. N. Das Gupta unhesitatingly accepts Deussen's interpretation and remarks that "If we look at Greek philosophy in Parmenides or Plato or at modern philosophy in Kant, we find the same tendency towards glorifying one unspeakable entity as the Reality or the Essence."—*A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I., p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

after and to expound the knowledge of the *atma*: is more and more elaborated in them. The conception of the *ātman* "is a negative and relative idea, which declares to us rather wherein the essence of man and of the universe is not to be sought, than affords us any positive information as to its real nature."<sup>3</sup> And this, far from being a defect, is supposed to be its "philosophical value," because "the essence of things remains, as far as its nature is concerned, eternally unknown; and every attempt to make it an object of knowledge compels us to impose upon it definitions which are borrowed from that sphere of experimental knowledge that alone is accessible to our intelligence, and these again do not penetrate to the essential reality of things." This agnostic theory, according to Deussen, is strongly emphasised by Yājñavalkya and permeates the teachings of many Upaniṣads.

Once Deussen has been able to persuade himself that the unknowability of the essence of the universe is the most valuable theory of the Upaniṣads, he naturally seeks to find in the teachings of Sāṅkara the same agnostic theory with its insistence on the absolute unknowableness of the Self through the ordinary means of knowledge or within the four corners of our ordinary experience. Thus, for instance, at the very beginning of his famous exposition of the position of Sāṅkara, Deussen starts with the assumption that the fundamental thought of the Vedānta consists in the thought that "the empirical view of nature is not able to lead us to a final solution of the being of things;" and this thought is supposed to be "the root of all metaphysics, so far as without it no metaphysics can come into being or exist."<sup>4</sup> The step

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87

<sup>4</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 47.

beyond physics to metaphysics "is only to be explained by a more or less clear consciousness that all empirical investigation and knowledge amounts in the end only to a great *deception* grounded in the nature of our knowing faculties, to open our eyes to which is the task of metaphysics." And here Śaṅkara's attempt is supposed to be analogous to that of Parmenides and Kant, with this difference that while Kant discovered the final reason of the false empirical concept in "the nature of our cognitive faculty," the Vedānta did not seek it there.<sup>5</sup> For this scientific foundation of the Vedānta, therefore, the Indians will accept the teachings of the Critique of Pure Reason "with grateful respect."

Considerations of space will not allow us to multiply quotations from Deussen's work to show in detail how his prejudices for agnosticism have coloured his interpretation of the position of Śaṅkara throughout his monumental book. His conclusions about the advaita theory of Self are identical with those which he arrived at in the process of interpreting the Upaniṣads. "However much we may agree with the Vedānta," it is observed, "when it holds that a fathoming of Being-in-itself is only possible in our own 'I,' and, in its metaphysics, pushes aside everything objective, and relies on the Subject only, we can as little agree with it when disregarding the objections of the opponent . . . it finds the last basis of Being in the Subject of Knowledge. The consequence is that the Vedānta denies itself an immediate insight into the essence of things; for the subject of knowledge can never become the object for us, precisely because in every cognition it must take the place of subject."<sup>6</sup> But the Indians, it is continued, found out a

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.



way of perceiving the subject the spirit Brahman. In all perception it "is assumed as the witness (*sākṣin*), that is, the knowing subject of knowledge. Yet there remains a possibility of knowing God: the *Yogin*, that is, here, he who has become one with God, sees him in the condition of *Samrādhānam*, literally: perfect satisfaction, which Śaṅkara explains as a sinking oneself (*pra-ni-dhānam*) in pious meditation." But, asks Deussen, does not the division of subject and object exist here also? Here the Vedānta thinkers answer this question "with a negative, but, as the basis of their view, can only bring forward similes and passages of scripture." But "an explanation of this unification of subject and object (as it actually takes place in the phenomena of aesthetic contemplation and religious devotion) cannot be obtained from their discussions."

Deussen's interpretation of the advaita system, which is certainly based upon wide scholarship and painstaking labour, has naturally commanded that sort of popularity which is enjoyed by every pioneer work. Consequently, his opinions here have been accepted as the most considered and careful views by all scholars within as well as outside India. "All that is important in Śaṅkara's commentary of the *Brahma-sūtras*," it has been remarked by one of our distinguished interpreters of Indian Philosophy, "has been excellently systematised by Deussen in his *System of the Vedānta*; it is therefore unnecessary for me to give any long account of this part."<sup>7</sup> This being the impression of an Indian scholar on the merits of Deussen's presentation of the advaita system, it is no wonder that the latter should be considered by all interested scholars as a reliable guide to

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. S. N. Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 489n

the position of that important school of Indian monism which was represented by Śaṅkara. In opposition to this widespread tendency to accept Deussen's interpretation as final, we venture to hold that Deussen has failed to grasp the central thought of the teachings of Śaṅkara as well as those of the Upaniṣads, and that the agnostic and mystic elements of the Vedānta system have been unjustifiably interpreted by him on the lines of western agnosticism associated with the names of Plato or Kant.

In justification of these contentions, we must begin with what we consider to be the central principle or the fundamental concept of the Vedānta philosophy, namely, the *Brahman* as the Principle of Revelation (or *śrayamprakāśa*) The Self as the ultimate principle of revelation, as is well known, is a characteristic tenet of the teachings of the Upaniṣads as well as of the school of Śaṅkara. The Self, either individual or Absolute, is, according to them, the eternal conscious principle (*nityacaitanyasvarūpa*) which reveals or illumines the entire world of objects while itself not standing in need of a more ulterior source of revelation, much as one light does not need another light for its own revelation. What it means, when put in another form of language, is that all our knowledge or experience may be ultimately analysed into a conscious principle to which are presented the 'things' that are known. This, again, implies that the conscious principle itself, inasmuch as it is the ultimate principle of revelation, cannot be an 'object' of knowledge or experience. Though invariably present in all experience, the self cannot be *known as an object*. So much must be granted by all interpreters of the Vedānta.

But it will be nothing less than a blunder if we failed to emphasise the complementary aspect of the concept of

self-revelation as it is used in the Vedānta literature. The conscious principle which illumines all objects of knowledge does not keep *itself* unrevealed or unknown; it cannot be said to be altogether falling beyond the limits of ordinary experience, simply on the ground that it is not known as an object. In other words, the term self-revelation or *svaprakāśa*, here, does not mean that the self reveals everything, while keeping us altogether ignorant or unaware of its own nature which, therefore, requires the aid of a higher faculty in the form of a mystic vision or religious ecstasy. On the contrary, what it does mean is that even ordinary experience implies a sort of self-experience which is the pre-condition of all knowledge of objects. This self-experience, of course, cannot mean the experience of the subject as an object, for, all knowledge of objects presupposes it; it is a sort of non-objectifying experience which is so far analogous to what S. Alexander calls 'enjoyment' as distinct from 'contemplation' or what Bradley calls 'immediate experience.' The analogy of light employed by the Vedānta thinkers is meant precisely to convey this important truth, and it would be nothing less than a disaster if interpreting the Upaniṣads or the position of the advaita thinkers we were to emphasise exclusively the truth that the self cannot be known as an object and miss the complementary aspect, which is equally important to remember, that the self, while knowing an object, must also have an experience of itself. Without this self-experience no experience is possible, and every analysis of experience that misses this important element present in all experience must inevitably lead to the theory of "thing-in-itself" which may then be thought to be unthinkable after Kant or known through a kind of higher faculty as urged by the mystics.

To show, in the light of our interpretation of the concept of self-revelation, how much of Deussen's exposition of the Upaniṣadic tenets represents the genuine teachings of the Vedānta would be impossible within the limits of the present essay. But one point that must be stressed here is this that he has, by virtue of an agnostic tendency derived from Kant's philosophy, put Yājñavalkya's speculations in an extremely misleading light. All the passages he has quoted to show the agnostic tenet of Yājñavalkya's thought (particularly on pp. 79-80 and 146—156 of *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*), when correctly interpreted, mean no more than this that the Brahman cannot be known as an object. On the other hand, the terms *ait*, *ātmaśyotiḥ*, *caitanya*, etc., profusely used in the Vedānta literature, point unmistakably to the truth that the Upaniṣadic Absolute, far from being unknowable, is knowable *par excellence*. That which is "the light of light," the "purest light," and "consisting through and through entirely of knowledge," cannot be an unknowable subject. On the contrary, it is ever known in knowing every object, it is itself its own light. The ordinary facts of dream and dreamless sleep are particularly made use of for establishing its nature which remains difficult of comprehension in waking experience on account of the fragmentary character of our knowledge. Similarly, the negative descriptions, indicated by the expressions 'not this' 'not this,' are not meant to assert that the *Brahman* is absolutely unknowable through "experimental knowledge." All that it signifies is that the Absolute cannot be known as an 'object of knowledge,' because it has none of the characteristics which must necessarily belong to the *knowable objects*. All relations and duality,—such as the duality of subject and object, space-relations, temporal relations, causal relations, etc.—con-

statute the very life-blood of the knowable objects but they are inapplicable to the *Brahman* which is pure Consciousness. But this does not reduce the *Brahman* to a mere zero or a pure naught. Nor does it mean that the reality of *Brahman* cannot be established except through a higher faculty or mystic intuition. It is true that mystic intuition has a very important place in the entire Vedānta discipline. This mystic intuition (*sāksātkāra*) is the ultimate goal of reasoned knowledge (*manana*). But it would be unjustifiable to infer from this that there is no 'self-experience' in the life of the ordinary man. On the contrary, the entire tenor and drift of the Upaniṣadic thought is to identify the self with the *Brahman* and thus to emphasise that the *Brahman*, far from being a denizen of an alien world accessible to the mystics alone, is constantly present in our "self-experience" which experience none can deny.

Nothing is further from our thought than the suggestion that the Upaniṣads embody a uniform doctrine. That there are conflicting tendencies in their teachings has been admirably shown by Deussen with a wealth of matter and profound scholarship that must wrest admiration from his worst critics. But our contention is that he has missed what seems to us to be the central thought of most of the Upaniṣads, probably under the influence of his intellectual heritage derived from Kant. Kant's theory of pure ego, based on a relentless, yet quite just, criticism of rational psychology, reduced itself to a mere 'X' in grasping which thought moved in a perpetual circle. Some of the Indian critics of Kant have thought that Kant's perplexities may well be removed by insisting that what eludes the grasp of thought is capable of being accomplished in mystic intuition, and it is this which is supposed to be the important lesson of the Vedānta. But, we submit,

this would be doing injustice to Kant as well as to the Vedānta. If Kant's analysis was defective, its defect should, in all fairness, be fought on the open field and not through a sluice-gate. Black-mailing is as unjust in the intellectual field as in social intercourse. On the other hand, by reading Kant's theory into the Upaniṣads, we deprive ourselves effectively of the very important weapon forged in the Vedānta furnace for killing the agnostic 'inconvenience' which worked disaster in the Kantian camp. Kant was certainly right in insisting that there can be "no knowledge of the subject as an object." The "unity of consciousness," it is rightly urged, is "the supreme condition of the categories," and, as such, it must not be confused with "a perception of the subject as an object." The subject "cannot think the categories without presupposing its own pure self-consciousness, and therefore self-consciousness cannot be brought under the categories."<sup>8</sup> But, having proceeded so far, Kant seems to have shuddered at his own shadow. The result is that, instead of courageously catching the essence of the self in this 'pure self-consciousness,' he throws it away as something "completely empty of content," yet admitting in the same breath that it is "a consciousness that accompanies all conceptions."<sup>9</sup>

Deussen's interpretation of the Upaniṣads suffers from the same lack of courage. The profuse extracts he has quoted from the Upaniṣads in order to show how they all aim at a knowledge of the *Brahman* which is thought to be Being (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānandī*), should have convinced him that such an Absolute cannot be identified

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<sup>8</sup> Watson's *Selections*, p. 154

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 148.

with the Thing in itself. The Vedānta conception of it being entirely different from the relational conception of consciousness, Deussen missed its real meaning and supposed that the Absolute Self, though a foundational conscious principle, might yet be an absolutely unknowable 'Thing-in-itself.' He never seems to have realised that what is essentially *svaprakāśa* can at no moment of time be unknowable. Thus, his interpretations are marred by the undetected presence of two incompatible ideas.<sup>10</sup>

That the Vedānta theory of the nature of the Absolute Self is different from the agnostic position is made all the more clear by Śaṅkara who has carefully distinguished the Self from a mere zero or naught. One of his clearest expressions in this respect is to be found in *S. B. III. 2. 22*. Here it is urged by Śaṅkara that it is impossible that the phrase 'not so, not so' should 'negative' *Brahman*, "since that would imply the doctrine of a general Void." "The phrase that *Brahman* transcends all speech and thought does certainly not mean to say that *Brahman* does not exist;" for after it has been said that *Brahman* is Existence, Knowledge, and Infinity, "it cannot be supposed all at once to teach its non-existence." The passage of the *Brh. Up.*, Śaṅkara

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<sup>10</sup> That Deussen misunderstood the meaning of the vedānta conception of it is also evident from the different ways in which he has translated the term. It is sometimes translated as 'mind' (*Ibid.*, p. 126), but at other places it is called the 'knowing subject within us' (*Ibid.*, p. 156). Yet in another place it is translated as 'intelligence' (*The System of the Vedānta*, p. 212). This might be partly due to the ambiguity with which the term 'mind' is used in English. It is well known that Green made an attempt to distinguish the term 'mind' from what he called "the subject." But Deussen does not stick to even this important distinction in translating it. He should at least have seen why Yājñavalkya, to whose theory of *neti neti* Deussen traces the absolute unknowableness of *Brahman* (*The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 82), was asked by Uśasta to explain the Self which was supposed to be given in direct immediate experience (*sākṣādāparokṣād brahma—Brh. Up. III. 4. 1*).

concludes, has, therefore, to be understood as follows "Brahman is that whose nature is permanent purity, consciousness, and freedom; it transcends speech and 'mind,' does not fall within the category of 'object,' and constitutes the inward 'self of all.'" The clear indication of these remarks is that *Brahman*, which is our own self, is something that does not belong to the class of 'objects'; it is *aviśayāntahpati*. Nor does it mean that *Brahman* "cannot be reached by the way of knowledge," as Deussen supposes<sup>11</sup> Because it, as the self in us, is ever given in an immediate non-objectifying experience (*i.e.*, *aparokṣāt ca pratyagātma-prasiddheḥ*, as put by Śaṅkara in his Introduction to S.B.)

It should be clear from such passages that the immediate experience, called *aparokṣānubhūti* in the vedānta system does not necessarily mean any Yogic perception. The latter, of course, is an immediate experience; but we cannot convert the assertion and urge that every type of immediate experience is a supernatural mystic perception. In other words, the advaita conception of *aparokṣānubhūti* is much wider than what is known as the Yogic perception. Consequently, when the self is said to be given in an immediate experience, the term 'experience' must not be construed as any extraordinary mystic experience. This is a point of vital importance for a correct interpretation of the position of Śaṅkara; because, the agnostic and mystic interpretation of the advaita position initiated by Deussen has been made possible only through an imperfect grasp of the term "*aparokṣa*," as used by the advaita philosophers. That Deussen did not sufficiently realise the importance of the meaning which this term is intended to convey is evident

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11 *The Philosophy of the Upanishads* p. 53



from the way in which he generally avoids any reference to this term, as well as from the dubious tone in which he sometimes speaks of it.<sup>12</sup>

It is evident, then, that the analogy between Śaṅkara and Kant breaks down completely on a point which is of vital importance for a proper estimate of the contribution, which the former has made, to a sound theory of knowledge. The self is not an unknowable and inconceivable "X", similarly, the Absolute is not, like the Thing-in-itself, something lying entirely beyond our ordinary experience or "experimental knowledge," as Deussen puts it. On the contrary, it must be urged at the risk of repetition, the Self, for Śaṅkara, is constantly given in an immediate experience apart from which no knowledge of 'objects' would be possible. It is true that the Indian monists of the advaita school held before themselves an ideal of Absolute Experience realised in the condition of mystic intuition or *samrādhānam*, and it was further believed that a perfect comprehension of the nature of the self is possible in that condition only. But the passage from the ordinary to the extraordinary experience was never conceived to be one from nothing to being. That is, the Absolute Experience was not conceived as a *deus ex machina*, and the process of development was not from an experience completely destitute of self-experience to another altogether different type of experi-

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<sup>12</sup> Deussen remarks that the inner Self is, "as our author here affirms, in no sense something transcendent, lying beyond the province of perception (*parokṣham*)". The whole assumption of an inner soul, Deussen translates, "rests on this, that it is not transcendent (*aparokṣha*)". Deussen nowhere clears up the connotation of the term as he understands it. But his agnostic interpretation of the position of Śaṅkara strongly suggests that by the term "not transcendent" he means "not lying beyond Yogic perception." In truth, however, every type of experience which is immediate and arising irrespective of the senses is called *aparokṣa* by the advaita thinkers.

ence in which the self is experienced for the first time. On the contrary, it was always supposed that there is not only an immediate self-experience at every moment of our life, but in this self-experience is given an indefinite type of Absolute Experience which attains perfection and clarity at the end of the entire process of discipline.<sup>13</sup>

It would, therefore, be a serious confusion between the position of Sāṅkara and that of the Buddhist nihilists to think that the Absolute of the advaita system cannot be theoretically known, because "in all knowing, it is the knowing subject, it can never be an object of knowledge for us"<sup>14</sup> Such an interpretation, as we have urged above is altogether incompatible with the advaita doctrine of the Self as the Eternal Conscious Principle (*nityacaitanyasārūpaḥ*). As we have put it above, "the assertion that the Absolute is theoretically incomprehensible would be as absurd as that there can be no theoretical knowledge of space on the ground that all spaces that are ever known are limited spaces, or that light is theoretically unknowable because what is known directly is an illumined object."<sup>15</sup>

That Deussen has definitely misunderstood the advaita doctrine of the self is further evident from his observation that "the Indian *caitanyam* comes very close to" the idea

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<sup>13</sup> That we have an indefinite sort of Absolute Experience before the complete 'vision' has dawned is sometimes distinctly said by the advaita thinkers. Vidyāranya, for instance, remarks, in reply to an adverse critic who might object that an enquiry into *Brahman* would be useless because it was either impossible or superfluous, that though it is true that the Absolute, which is identical with one's own self, is known indirectly or directly, yet a philosophical enquiry is necessary either for converting the indirect knowledge into a direct experience or for steadying the direct experience which is already there. *Parokṣatzenāpratiṣṭhā parokṣcitena vā avagate niscalāparokṣātāgataye tadīcchopapattih—Vivaraṇa-Prameya-Saṅgrahaḥ*, Tarkabhūṣana's edition, III. p. 190.

<sup>14</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 143

<sup>15</sup> *Supra*. p. 311.

of Force. "All existence, in its essence, is nothing but a manifestation of Force and all Knowledge may be considered as a reaction against the crowd of impressions, and therefore as an activity of Force."<sup>16</sup> The *caitanyam*, it is said at another place, "is, in our system, a potency which lies at the root of all motion and change in nature, which is therefore also ascribed, for example, to plants, and means thus rather the capacity of reaction to outer influences, a potency which, in its highest development, reveals itself as human intellect, as spirit."<sup>17</sup> Such a misinterpretation of the vedānta term '*caitanyam*' would not merit a refutation if it had not originated from such a scholar of Indian thought as Deussen. This term, as is well known, is at the very basis of the vedānta system, and any arbitrary interpretation, therefore, would distort the system as a whole beyond all recognition. The concept of Force or Will can hardly be an adequate substitute for what, according to it, is the ultimate principle of revelation without which no object can be *known*. The predominantly epistemological character of the vedānta, with its emphasis on consciousness, knowledge, or *jñānam*, is sure to be completely obscured by the unwarranted assumption that the advaita conception of *caitanya* is an equivalent of Force or Will.

Similarly, if a metaphysical position which sees "in Will the final origin of Being"<sup>18</sup> commends itself to Deussen, then the advaita position is altogether irreconcilable with his metaphysical prepossessions. Because, Being is held by the advaita thinkers to be the most universal and irrepressible

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<sup>16</sup> *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 213

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

category, and, as such, everything is rooted in Being, and the Will cannot be an exception, A *quid* anterior to *caitanya* or consciousness—call it a Will, *Velle*, or *Nolle*—would be as repugnant to Śaṅkara as it is to the modern idealists. For parallel developments of thought in respect of this vital problem, one must turn, therefore, not to Schopenhauer, but rather to the idealists. The Absolute, we are told for instance by an eminent idealist of contemporary India, “is an eternally complete consciousness. Any lesser definition of it is self-contradictory, and raises anew all the difficulties for overcoming which the conception is framed”<sup>19</sup> In a similar strain, it is remarked by Haldane that “behind the fact of consciousness one cannot go. It is our ‘that’ of which one can only inquire into the ‘what.’”<sup>20</sup> To quote from the work of yet another accomplished idealist, the existence of a knowable nature implies “a principle of consciousness which, in relation to sensibility, yields laws of nature, which is not itself subject to those laws of nature.”<sup>21</sup>

Deussen’s perplexities here appear to arise from the vedānta distinction between pure consciousness and what he calls the intellectual apparatus or the psychic apparatus of the mind.<sup>22</sup> He admits that in so far as God is the metaphysical I of man himself, “his existence cannot be proved at all, but also it does not need to be proved, because he is that which is alone known directly, and thereby the basis of all certainty.”<sup>23</sup> And here he rightly compares the posi-

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<sup>19</sup> Dr. H. Haldar, *Essays*, p. 55

<sup>20</sup> *The Reign of Relativity*, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> T. H. Green, *Works* II, p. 90.

<sup>22</sup> See, particularly, *The System of the Vedānta*, p. 39 and p. 326.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

tion of the vedānta with the *Cogito ergo sum* of Descartes. But this does not convince him of the wisdom of the vedānta identification of the real self with consciousness, though, according to Descartes and Śaṅkara alike, consciousness alone can provide "the basis of all certainty." On the contrary, he fancies that the Vedānta, while rightly recognising the source of true knowledge in our own "I," wrongly "halts at the form in which it directly appeals to our consciousness, as a knower, even after it has cut away the whole intellectual apparatus, and ascribed it to the 'not I,' the world of phenomena."<sup>24</sup> This is called "the fundamental want of the Vedānta system, which, among other things, causes the absence of its proper morality." The description of God as the Knower, it is observed elsewhere, indicates no actorship, and "the difference between God and the soul is a mere appearance, while liberation is a seeing through this appearance."<sup>25</sup> But "all attempts of this kind to grasp liberation as a new form of knowledge, do not give, and cannot give, any satisfactory conclusion as to its nature, so long as it is not supplemented by the idea of the moral transformation which is so strongly accentuated by Christianity, but remained foreign to Indian thought."<sup>26</sup>

So far as the "idea of the moral transformation" is concerned, the confusion of Deussen and a number of other interpreters of Indian thought has been thoroughly exposed by Indian scholars, particularly by Dr. Gangānātha Jha in *The Philosophical Discipline*. It has been emphasised, in particular, that Śaṅkara's predominantly theoretical approach to the problems of philosophy does not make light

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>26</sup> *Loc. cit.*

of the necessity of a thorough moral discipline in the form of renunciation of all desires for the fruits of actions, tranquillity, self-restraint, duties of the "four life-stages," etc.<sup>27</sup> In fact, a theoretical adventure without a moral background is definitely opposed to the genius of Indian philosophy. And Śaṅkara's condemnation of the empirical world as a mere appearance is not incompatible with a fixed criterion of truth or of morality.<sup>28</sup> Here, the confusion, we believe, is due to a disastrous mixing up of two different standpoints from which Śaṅkara is in the habit of arguing. The world of plurality, according to the advaita thinkers, has different values according as it is viewed from the standpoint of finite experience or of Infinite Experience. And, consequently, such terms as "truth," "reality," "unreality," "appearance," etc., have each an ambiguous connotation as it is used in the advaita literature. But this point needs no further elaboration in view of what has already been done by a number of contemporary interpreters. It has, for instance, been rightly urged that for Śaṅkara "unreal the world is, illusory it is not."<sup>29</sup> Conse-

<sup>27</sup> Vide *Ibid.*, pp. 25—36.

<sup>28</sup> See, particularly, S. B. II 1 14.

<sup>29</sup> Sir S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II., p. 533. This statement, we venture to suggest, is not entirely free from ambiguity, though it is sufficient for counteracting the prevalent notion that the world of finite experience for Śaṅkara is a mere illusion. A better rendering of the advaita view in the present context would perhaps run as follows: The world of plurality is perfectly real from the standpoint of finite experience; but when looked at from that of the Infinite experience, it is even less than a dream or illusion, and, as such, it has never existed in the past, does not exist at present, and will never exist in the future. To put it in the words of Śaṅkara, that the world is a dream is a doctrine which must be understood in a distinctive sense (*atataiśesikamidaṁ saṁjhyāṇya nṛāyāmātratvamudītam*—S. B. III. 2.4). Our empirical world is not "real from the infinite stand-point" but it is perfectly real from the finite standpoint. Even the vedānta term *āpekṣika satyam* must not be translated as "relative reality," as is done, for instance, by Sir S. Radhakrishnan.

quently the doctrine that the world is a *mūḥuḥ* does not militate against any fixed criterion of truth or the need of a moral discipline.

What we must challenge here, however, is Deussen's identification of pure consciousness with "the unconscious." What he calls "the psychic apparatus" is according to Śaṅkara, a composite structure including within itself the conscious principle and what, in the opinion of the advaita thinkers, are unconscious mental modifications. The fruitfulness of this distinction as well as the perplexities arising out of their identification have been explained by us. We have seen, for instance, that the problem of personal identity surviving the breaks in the psychical current in deep sleep, the perception of an object, the awareness of change, recognition, and memory,—all these require, for their adequate explanation, a clear recognition of the composite character of the so-called psychic apparatus. And a close approach to this advaita doctrine is made by some of the modern idealists in their analysis and explanation of perception, particularly by T. H. Green.<sup>30</sup>

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(*Indian Philosophy*, Vol I, p. 120), because this might lead to the confusion of Śaṅkara's position with the modern theory of relativity of knowledge. The latter, in the hands of Einstein or the pragmatists, is a protest against the doctrine of absolute truth in human knowledge. For Śaṅkara, on the contrary, there are absolute criteria of truth and morality in our knowledge, in spite of its nothingness when viewed from the standpoint of Infinite experience. It is, therefore, less ambiguous to translate the term *āpekṣita-satyam* as "absolute truth from the finite standpoint." The precise significance of the advaita distinction between the *Pāramārthika* and the *Vyāvahārika* view of reality is excellently brought out by Professor R. D. Ranade with the help of Spinoza's famous distinction between reality viewed *sub specie aeternitatis* and *sub specie temporis* respectively.—See, particularly, *Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 215 and p. 231.

<sup>30</sup> We may remember here his indignant remark that in analysing the relation between the mind and the external world one should distinguish between several questions "the confusion between which has been a great snare for philosophers" (*Works*, I, p. 134.) These questions, according to him, are those of relation between a sensitive and non-sensitive

Deussen's confusion here is surely due to a lack of clear distinction between consciousness and sensibility, or, to put it in the language of the vedānta, between *bodha* and *buddhi*. The latter, quite as much as the tree or the table, is an object of knowledge, and, as such, presupposes the reality of the former which, therefore, may very aptly be called foundational knowledge or foundational consciousness. And, as a matter of fact, many modern idealists call it 'Knowledge.' In this respect, Knowledge or Consciousness, far from being an unconscious will or potency, is the *prīus* of reality. It is not a "feeble faculty," as Deussen thinks,<sup>31</sup> nor is it something unconscious;<sup>32</sup> on the contrary, it is the ultimate principle of revelation without which nothing can be known.

Allied with Deussen's confusion on the so-called psychic apparatus is his view that the Vedānta finds "the last basis of Being in the Subject of Knowledge." The truth, on the contrary, is that the Vedānta finds in Knowledge the ultimate principle which is presupposed by all relations including the relation of the subject to the object. In other words, the subject-object relation, far from being an ultimate relation, has a meaning only because of the reality of the foundational knowledge. It is true that the term

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body, between thought and its object, and between thought and something only qualified as the negation of thought. The psychological method, it is said elsewhere, "has held to the position, conceded by the introspectionists of the school of Locke, that the experience of related objects, in which the whole work of consciousness is implicitly contained, is given *ab extra* through modification of the sentient organism. The objective psychologists, "having begun by confusing sentience with consciousness, come to regard 'the external' as independent of consciousness." (*Ibid*, p 482.) Such remarks clearly indicate the need of distinguishing consciousness from sentience which approximately corresponds to the advaita distinction between *cit* or *bodha* and *buddhi*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 134.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* pp 127 135 and 176



knower is sometimes used by the advaita thinkers to indicate the ultimate character of knowledge; but this must not be interpreted as implying the reality of an agent of knowledge of which knowledge is an activity. This duality of a knowing agent and the process of knowledge, though required for expressing in language the highest nature of the self, is nothing more than a makeshift dictated by linguistic exigencies; but it does not exist within the Self which in its ultimate nature is an undifferentiated and indivisible conscious principle. All distinctions are known in the light of this Knowledge, but there is no distinction *within* it. I can distinguish between 'x' and 'y,' because I remain perfectly identical with myself while apprehending the distinction of 'x' from 'y'. Without this identical conscious principle, no distinction can be known; consequently, a theory which introduces the distinction of the agent from the act of knowledge into the conscious principle itself must necessarily land itself in inextricable difficulties in accounting for our knowledge of difference.

This being the real position of the advaita doctrine of Self, its denial of actorship, far from being a defect in its analysis of knowledge, testifies to the thoroughness and depth of its epistemological insight. And it is, therefore, very misleading to characterise the genuinely advaita position as subscribing to the theories of intellectualism or of voluntarism. The fact is that it places the essential nature of the Self, neither in Knowing nor in Willing as supposed by Deussen,<sup>33</sup> but in Knowledge or Consciousness which is taken to be the ultimate presupposition of all specific knowledge-events and all special acts of will.

Here we find from a different standpoint the error of

reducing the self in deep sleep to an imaginary cognition. The particular knowledge-events, it has been rightly seen by Deussen, do not exist in the state of dreamless slumber. But, inasmuch as these specific knowledges pre-suppose the foundational Knowledge, the absence of the former is no argument for denying the presence of the latter, much as the absence of illumined objects cannot be made the basis of the inference about the absence of light. What stands in the way of an adequate comprehension of the nature of the Self in deep sleep is the fact that the self in that stage exists as an unconditioned principle or a non-relational conscious principle. This is what is signified by the advaita tenet of the individual self 'entering' into the *Brahman*; it does not mean that the Self, then, reduces itself to "an unconscious because objectless Cognition."<sup>34</sup> The unconditional conscious principle is neither a mere nothing as some of the Buddhists fancied, nor is it an unconscious Will as supposed by Deussen. On the contrary, as we have repeatedly observed, it is the ultimate principle of revelation which forms the necessary background of all relational and conditioned objects; and it is ever given, however imperfectly, in our undeniable self-experience or self-enjoyment.

We have subjected Deussen's interpretation of the Vedānta to a rather lengthy criticism in view of the influence it has exercised upon the subsequent interpreters of Śaṅkara. It will be impossible to show in detail here the extent of this influence. We must, therefore, content ourselves with a brief reference to some of the unambiguous expressions of Śaṅkara which show, on the one hand, that the Self, for him, cannot be an unknowable entity, to be known, if at all, through an extraordinary type of intuition; and, on the

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

other hand that the Self is not a Subject in the sense in which it means an agent of the activity of knowledge as distinguished from the act of knowing and the object of knowledge.

In a well-known passage of Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Gītā*,<sup>35</sup> it is asked: How can there be a cognition of the Absolute Self in the truest sense of the term? The consummation of Absolute-Experience (*Brahma-jñānasya parā parisamāptih*), it is said in reply, is of the same nature as self-knowledge (*ātma-jñānam*). But, again, the difficulty arises as to the way of self-knowledge. The self has been said to be form-less (*nirākāra*), but it is universally admitted that all cognition assumes the form of the object that is cognised; hence the problem is: How is the constant meditation of self-knowledge possible? In answering this apparently difficult problem, Śaṅkara remarks significantly that the self being essentially the conscious principle within us, it is unnecessary to impart a knowledge of the self, "inasmuch as it is invariably comprehended in association with all objects of perception." All that is needed is the destruction of our habit of attributing to it the qualities of the not-self (*anātmaādhyāropanavivṛttiḥ eva kāryā*). When this is done, it will be seen that the self, far from being something that has to be known as the distant ideal of knowledge, is "quite self-evident, easily known, very near, and forming our very essence." There is nothing in the world which is more blissful, self-evident, easily knowable, and quite near. This self-knowledge, it is further observed, is difficult only for those who are either self-conceited or whose intellect is so engrossed with the external sense-given objects that they make no laborious study of the

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<sup>35</sup> XVIII. 50 See also S. B. I. 1. 4.

sources of real knowledge. The fact is that "the self is not a thing unknown to anybody at any time, it is not a thing to be attained or avoided, established or accomplished . . . . Just as there is no need for an external evidence by which one's own body is to be known, so there is no need for such an evidence in the case of the knowledge of the self which is even nearer than the body." Similarly, "those who think that there can be no immediate perception of unconditioned knowledge must all the same admit that, since an object of knowledge presupposes the fact of knowledge, this latter is as immediately known as pleasure and the like." We, no doubt, seek to know an *object*, but not knowledge itself; knowledge, therefore, is self-revealed, and so is the self. (*Atyantaprasiddham jñānam jñātā api ata eva prasiddha iti.*)

In view of the explanation we have already attempted of the advaita doctrine of the self as an ultimate principle of revelations, it is needless to say anything more in elucidating Śaṅkara's contentions in these passages. That knowledge, for the advaita thinkers, is essentially unconditioned, and that it is yet given constantly in a sort of immediate experience are particularly emphasised by them.



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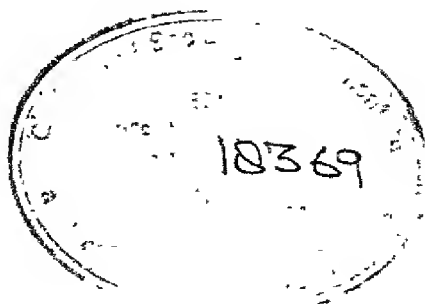
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